Will Eisner on "Comics In The Library"
Super Law Suit? · The Comics Code, Part 2

INSIDE COMICS

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 4
WINTER 1974-75

$1

"May We Have The Next Slide, Please?"

How the great Golden Age Heros might have appeared if drawn by today's comic standards

by C.C.Beck

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WINTER 1974-75

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LETTERS

THE CODE AFTERMATH

To the Editor...

Leonard Darvin's self-serving rantings on the subject of underground comix in "The Comic Consumer" were distorted and unfair. This is especially disturbing as they were directed towards an audience of distributors and magazine wholesalers and were clearly designed to have a chilling effect on the sales of underground comix.

In point of fact, since the Supreme Court's 1973 obscenity decision, no one has been "convicted" or "jailed" for selling comix as Darvin alleges.

Mr. Darvin cannot be unaware—a full year after the Supreme Court decision in question—that no one in the underground comix industry has been subject to so much as a two cents fine, and his "warnings" are therefore calculatedly irresponsible towards an industry which has become a formidable competitor of his own interests.

Jay Lynch
Chicago, Ill.
July 27, 1974

Jay Lynch is a noted underground writer/cartoonist whose latest work, NARD 'N PAT, was released recently by the Cartoonist Co-op.

To the Editor...

The Comics Code fosters an image of America which was not touched upon in your **INSIDE COMICS** article. The Code fosters an image which was false and presents a set of moral values and outlooks which is narrow-minded and ofttimes disgusting. Perhaps this is because of the influence of John Goldwater and his Archie series. These comics have always reflected that pervasive image to a degree more than any others.

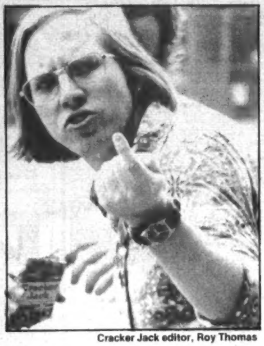
To ignore that the comics are chauvinistic is also foolish. It presents an outlook on life which fosters the traditional image dating back to the pioneer values of God, family and country and it presents the American dream of a suburban wife, two kids, two cars, etc. as the only true way to succeed in life psychologically, morally and spiritually. The effect of the Code leaves a young reader with the impression that should he follow the elusive American dream that happiness and contentment for all will follow as it does in an Archie comic.

Mark Gaspar
Flushing, New York
July 21, 1974

BULLISH ON BECK

To the Editor...

Regarding Roy Thomas' comment in issue #3, referring to C.C. Beck as a "bitter old man": we could not disagree more. Having met Mr. Beck at the convention in New York last year, and discussing many of the trends in the art industry, we find him head and shoulders above most illustrators who draw the so-called "comics" of today. Furthermore, judging by his article in your second issue, he's one heckuva satirist! Encore, Mr. Beck, encore!!



Cracker Jack editor, Roy Thomas

There are many good illustrators today who use complex backgrounds and shadow techniques, anatomically perfect heroes and beautiful women. This is all well and good. But there is only one Captain Marvel and everybody knows it. Beck's simple and honest talent says all that need be said when drawing the good Captain, because he illustrates with love as well as a brush. Mr. Schaffenberger is certainly an excellent draftsman, but we find his Captain Marvel to be cold and unfeeling when compared to Beck's. The others, like Oksner, are not even worth mentioning. True, Beck's art on the revival of Captain Marvel in D.C.'s **SHAZAM** is completely unadorned as to detailed backgrounds, etc., but then you have to realize the whole package, minus **only** the script, was put together by this Cartoon Stylist. Did you ever try to meet a deadline doing panel breakdowns, layouts, pencilling, inking **and** lettering all by yourself?!! Then, providing you have **time**, add a lot of detail? We notice that a lot of the material produced by the Marvel "Factory" have had as many as six or seven names appended to the credits of one story!! Seems we recall, once upon a time in those halcyon days of fandom, an enterprising young man from St. Louis, with the initials of "Roy Thomas," acclaimed with much praise the art of Mr. Beck in a fanzine titled **ALTER EGO**. Methinks the ego has altered. We suggest you examine once more the cover accompanying the article in INSIDE COMICS. Under close scrutiny you'll find that Beck's art today looks **exactly** as it did in **1941!** That's assuming he did this cover recently, and we presume he did. Notice all the blacks and detailed brush strokes? Now compare the drawing with the work done in early issues of **WHIZ**, say numbers 14 thru 25, when he and Pete Costanza were doing their finest work together, and you'll find very little, if any, difference! It's very possible, Mr. Thomas, that this could be the reason the new **SHAZAM** failed to impress you! We'll go along with Mr. Beck's reasoning and agree that it needed his editorial guidance. The present day version, as in the case of the early **SUPERMAN** under the direction of Siegel and Shuster, is completely unrelated to the original. The early stories used humor quite frequently, true, but it was used to masterly advantage even when the stories were mysteries and adventure tales. How many readers of the current travesty realize that in the early version there actually **were** good, adventurous themes? You'd never know it by the asinine stories and art that are foisted on the comic readers of today.

Naturally artists and editors will often disagree; however, when you compare Beck's excellent efforts and abilities to some of the tripe being produced now, it is easy to see where an artist of his stature is at a disadvantage. Mr. Beck's work makes sense. This is perhaps the unkindest truth of all for C.C.'s rivals to accept.

Ed Vance
Colonial Heights, Va.
Tom Long
Richmond, Va.
August 1, 1974

NON-CONFORMITY

To the Editor...

INSIDE COMICS, after all, is improving. Sadly, fans don't seem to be following suit.

"Today's comics are washed out," says reader Frank Mell. "They're one corporate point of view. Sameness. Conformity."

To someone with only an overview of comics, they have **always** been the same, washed out. Let's face it, the Basil Wolvertons, the Harvey Kurtzmans, were never the norms. Most artists, most writers, tend to steer toward the safer, tried-and-truer forms of comic (?) art (?)—it sells, so...

That's how it's **always** been—not just in comics, but in every form of popular literature. The best endures, but it's always surrounded by the **mediocre** when it first appears.

That doesn't mean that **everybody** slavishly follows tried-n-truism. There are some great pieces of comic art being created today by people with their own styles in art and script. Joe Staton, Frank Robbins, and Steve Ditko come to mind—certainly, Ditko and Robbins have been in the business for years, but each has retained and developed a highly individual graphic style.

Nick Cuti is one of the few writers dedicated to writing a truly funny superhero: Charlton's **E-Man**. Steve

Gerber comes up with brilliant satire and real humanity in **Man-Thing**. Steve Englehart continues to produce comic **literature** in **Dr. Strange**.

No, there aren't one-page funnies in comic books today—but that hasn't stopped these people from being creative. It's a good sign for any form of literature when the creators no longer need to separate serious stories from humor; the two should, by rights, be intertwined.

Part of the fan myopia typified by Frank Mell-type thinkers becomes clear in a single statement: "...who do we have left, uh, Marvel or DC." No mention of Charlton, where Cuti, Staton, and Ditko do most of their work. No mention of Red Circle, a company willing to experiment in ways that would raise the level of the medium above the sameness and conformity so deplored by Mell. No mention of Warren, or Rich Corben...

Open your eyes, Frank Mell—open your mind. You won't find the uncommonly good by looking for mediocrity and wishing for the past. Fandom—and humanity in general—needs nostalgia less than they need intelligence, generously distributed.

F.J. Hayes III
Moline, Illinois
July 14, 1974

F.J. Hayes is a columnist for Street Enterprizes' MENOMONEE FALLS GAZETTE and GUARDIAN.

DR. DECKER SPEAKS!

To the Editor...

When I first entered fandom some years ago, the super-hero boom was in full swing and it seemed that most fans felt the world would be perfect if Marvel would only bring out an **Inhumans** monthly and if the comic dealers would only lower their prices on Golden Age material just a teeny bit. Times have certainly changed. The 1967 Marvel super-hero fan suddenly transported to 1974 would be aghast both at what he saw on the newsstand and in the Overstreet Guide.

I suspect that the Marvel fan of the early to mid-sixties was in large part attracted by the sheer warmth Stan Lee exuded on the Bullpen Pages and in the stories. Fans could get wrapped up in the lives of the characters and really care about what happened to them, and Lee's non-stop enthusiasm was infectious. Marvel had Heart not too very long ago.

Now Marvel's heart has a stake through it. Marvel gluts the stands with four zillion horror comics. Even if Lee were still writing comics, I doubt if much good cheer and friendliness could come through in comics about vampires, sons and daughters and third cousins twice removed of Satan, zombies, wolfmen, and a ghost or two, not to mention exorcisms, graveyards, murders, and ... well, death. **Death** comics are the post-Lee Marvel stock-in-trade. All the old Lee puns and alliterations and cute sayings are still there, astonishingly inappropriate to Marvel's new funeral parlor atmosphere (an ad for the zombie B&W promising "Walking Dead Wonderment").

I was more than a little bothered by the Dracula strip. After all, this is a character who lives off other people's blood. He isn't much of a hero at all; in fact, he's a villain pure and simple. To make him a lead character would mean having to portray him with at least **some** sympathy, and I found that idea revolting. As I find the resultant strip. Whatever esteem I had for Marvel went out the window with their Morbius strip. I'm sorry, Roy, but my sympathy does not extend to murderers who want my pity or empathy because they "can't help it."

For that matter, my understanding does not reach as far as to include people who **like** Marvel's necrocentric comic line. Death is a fact of life, but these comics make it a way of life. They wallow in death and revel in murders and burials and rotting corpses and blood-sucking vampires. The themes dominating the horror comics are not merely unhealthy, they are **perverse**. Our business is life and the living of it, not 4-color (or dirty-looking half-toned) death-worship.

When Roy Thomas says that his lurching-dead B&Ws are read by an audience older than that for the color comics, I don't doubt it. But more intelligent? **That** I can't see.

I'm not necessarily suggesting that comics should go back to costume heroes. I'm not a little tired of those, too. But the masked avengers usually had at least the advantage of being **alive**. Surely there was some other direction comic publishers could have taken besides the "horror" one. Some direction to a genre where the characters were alive and glad of it.

On another subject, I've seen Bill Wu's name before—in a letter column or two, I think—and there he was again operating as a one-man Oriental Anti-Defamation League. I can see his point well enough: Orientals have rarely been characterized well in American popular media. Chop Chop and tong killers with hatchets spring immediately to mind. On the other hand, I wonder if the overpowering presence of watchdog groups representing every minority group imaginable is not ultimately inhibiting to any sort of creativity? Publishers these days have enough problems doing good comics without having to worry about offending the Albanians, too.

I think a good case could be made that Caucasians are racially slurred in comics, as well. All white males are either rough, tough musclemen without characters or personalities, or weak and simpering cowards, and so on. The point is, of course, that comics don't characterize **anybody** very well. They've relied on stereotypes because they were a handy shortcut to identification. I've never quite understood why Orientals were always given a lemon yellow coloring, unless it was for that matter of instant reader identification, for my experience with them (and I saw hundreds daily when I worked at the LA Zoo) has been that a sun-tanned Caucasian and an Oriental have virtually identical complexions. Comics might as well color the

..."Caucasians are racially slurred...as well."

Oriental characters the same as the Caucasians and let it go at that.

I've managed to miss most of the Marvel Kung-Fu books and I may be the better for it. But I have seen a number of the movies from Hong Kong, and **their** stereotypes are even more interesting. Chinese are good-hearted, hard-working, and trusting souls. Japanese are sly, cunning, deceiving, and treacherous, but somewhat cowardly. If the Chinese hadn't lost all their best and bravest fighters in street fights between rival Kung Fu schools, the Japanese never would have taken over before WWII. Koreans are very cowardly and docile: they bow and scrape to their Japanese conquerors, but the Chinese fight back. And I've found that the most Caucasian-looking character in one of those movies is the one most likely to be the hero.

So what does it prove? Nothing, except perhaps that Jewish and Italian comic book publishers and their North European lackeys aren't the only ones promoting ethnic stereotypes. Or that view-with-alarm articles exposing "racism" in this or that medium make for very dull and tedious reading these days.

Dwight R. (DR.) Decker
Tujunga, California
August 3, 1974

Dwight Decker is perhaps best-known for his now defunct TRUE FAN ADVENTURE THEATRE, a ditto fanzine which elevated "fan fiction" to an art. Decker is now a free-lance writer, occasionally contributing to Gold Key's funny animal line and translating Perry Rodan books.

INSIDE COMICS accepts letters on anything related to the comic art field. Address all mail to: INSIDE COMICS Letters, 11 West 17th Street, New York, New York 10011.

THE COMIC REPORT

SEABOARD FLOUNDERS

In the last **INSIDE COMICS**, it was reported that **Seaboard Comics**, a new alternative to the Marvel/DC lines had been launched; now, some six months later, it appears the new line is in serious trouble. After a promising start, in which large numbers of top artists and writers left the established companies to work for Seaboard (in exchange for better pay and benefits), the process has started to reverse, Seaboard's top men are leaving in droves. Why?—

Item—Howard Chaykin, writer/artist on "the Scorpion quit" after extended arguments with Seaboard editor-in-chief Jeff Rovin—seems that although Howie's contract indicates that he has ownership of the Scorpion character and that he should have some say in writing Scorpion stories, Rovin commissioned an inventory piece to cover a missed deadline, a deadline missed because Rovin himself miscalculated his printing time.

Item—Mike Fleisher not only quit Seaboard, but instituted a suit concerning their alleged misuse and misappropriation of characters he created.

Howard Chaykin

Item—Sal Amendola (Phoenix) quit after the primary conception of the character as other than a superhero went down the drain with the creation of super-powers, a costume, and superhero-type scripts.

Item—Larry Hama (Wulf) quit after the cover for the third issue was rejected, said rejection coming after the rough was okayed by Seaboard's top three executives and after Hama was told to get it done over a weekend.

Item—Mike Ploog quit after his promised freedom in designing and executing new characters did not turn out to be quite as free as expected.

Item—Despite advertisements to the contrary, and reluctant permission by Jim Warren, it appears that Bill Dubay will not be doing a book for Seaboard; seems Dube expects the worse and is keeping himself out of a worsening situation.

All in all, it seems that the golden promise of Seaboard is rapidly becoming nothing more than a gilded dream, and the hope of the professionals for a third major market is rapidly becoming just another faded dream. With no sales figures in as yet, it is difficult to say if Seaboard will go under. It is possible to say, however, that unless changes in managerial and editorial attitude do not take place, the future of the Seaboard line is very shaky. □

20 YEARS OF THE COMICS CODE

On Nov. 13 the **Comics Magazine Association of America** (Comics Code Authority) held its 20th birthday party at the Friar's Club in New York. The keynote of

the day was the speech by Mr. John L. Goldwater, president of the CMAA whose basic premise was self-congratulation:

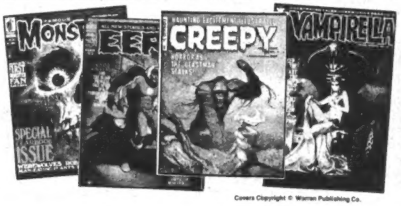
"Would anyone here dispute my assertion that were it not for the Code, and its dedicated enforcement over the years, comic books would not be acceptable in the schools and libraries today? Would anyone dispute the fact that in this day of aggressive consumerism, community, legislative, and judicial concern over media, especially that directed to youngsters, the Code has proved a bulwark—as close to being trouble-free to its publishers, distributors, wholesalers and retailers as any media can hope to be?

"The road the code has travelled for twenty years has not been an easy one. At its beginning, there were the cynics who said that when the heat was off, the industry would abandon the code. It did not abandon the code, and it was not until 17 years after its adoption, in 1971, that it was revised at all, and this was done to catch up with contemporary standards of taste and morality. Its essential principles of insuring clean entertainment suitable for youngsters was fully retained, and the code, because of its realistic approach, is stronger than ever before."

A pretty statement, but one that does not ring entirely true. Dell/Gold Key comics have competed in this highly aggressive market **without** benefit of the code for many years and I don't see anybody asserting that their works are in bad or improper taste. I also do not see that any code that takes 17 years to update its standards (and that after member companies forced the issue by publishing non-code comics) can claim to be a viable and growing force. Perhaps it is time to re-examine the concept of the code itself, and the people who adminster it. □

WARREN CUT BACK

James Warren, publisher of **Famous Monsters**, **Eerie**, **Creepy**, and **Vampirella**, seems to have some financial difficulty. His black and white magazines, generally considered the best in the field, have reduced print runs, cut out all interior color reproduction, and severely curtailed plans for new projects. Word from the Warren camp is that the cutback is due to a shortage of ready funds. Are Warren's sales down to a dangerous level? Has the incursion of the multitudinous Marvel b&w's (cancel one, and three more take its place) hurt the Warren empire? Only time, or Jim Warren, will tell. □



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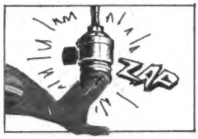
RED CIRCLE DEAD

The **Archie/Red Circle** line of quality comic books is apparently dead. Archie has discontinued publication of **"Tales of Sorcery," "Madhouse,"** and the as yet unseen **"Black Hood,"** for the time being. Reason: sales have been unspectacular and the tendency of newsdealers to place the mystery books with the regular Archie titles has hurt visibility tremendously. Editor/artist Gray Morrow says he hopes the cessation of publication is only temporary, but that he fears the line is dead for good. □

COMIC BOOKS ARE GOOD FOR YOU

Comic books, once scorned by teachers and parents, are now being used as an intellectual resource to help problem readers. **Marvel Comics Group**, in collaboration with **Children's Television Workshop** is publishing **"Spidey Super Stories,"** a comic specifically designed to help in remedial reading courses.

It seems that Children's TV Workshop discovered that many of their audience of 6,000,000 children were attracted to comic books, but that they were having problems reading them because the dialogue was too difficult. Studies revealed that students with reading problems were still able to follow the book's stories by merely looking at the pictures and skipping the dialogue balloons entirely. To remedy this, CTW and Marvel designed a new comic—**"Spidey Super Stories"**—which is written in such a way that it is almost impossible to understand the plot line by simply looking at the illustrations. In addition, the word-balloons were made larger and more simple than usual and placed in such a manner that the eye naturally tends to



gravitate to them before the pictures. In addition, Spiderman will be added to the cast of the **"Electric Company"** on TV and all his dialogue on the show will appear in word-balloons placed over his head. The entire package, it is hoped, will give schools another source of incentive to problem readers. □

COMICS AND GOSPEL

Jughead's got religion. Archie, Moose, Betty, Veronica, and the rest of the Riverdale High School gang are preaching the gospel in a series of comics, courtesy of the **Fleming H. Revell Co.**, a religious publishing house.

Drawn by Allan Hartley, who sketches the regular Archie series, the comics are identical to the regulars, even down to advertisements and mini-stories, with one exception: all carry a conservative Christian message.

Well, everything isn't quite the same. The girls are a little more developed, and the themes are a little heavier than the usual comics fare. But the idea of the whole thing is to teach the power of Jesus.

Hartley, who has drawn Archie books for eight years, has spoken of his religious convictions to various church groups and has said he is introducing spiritual themes into the regular **Archie Comics**. Asked about his association with the Revell people, Hartley answered, "We have a mutual friend—God."

The books, along with others in the Revell series, sell particularly well in the Bible Belt states, where they are a favorite of kids on the way to Sunday school, but do little business in the big metropolitan areas. "Alien territory?" "No," replied Hartley. "As a matter of fact it's one of the most fertile fields. When you hit any metropolitan area, you get a group who

Allan Hartley

really don't read much except comics."

In any case, the Archie folk have given the green light to Hartley's moonlighting, provided they get approval-rights of stories featuring Archie-characters, and that they not be sold on newsstands in competition with their regular comics.

Hartley sees much more religion for young people in the future. "Young people are realizing a lot of values they've been holding onto aren't as lasting as they thought," he said. □

MORE FRAZETTA

Fan publisher Russ Cochran, who has done more to make the work of Frank Frazetta available to his public than anyone in the states, has a new project in the works: a set of quality posters taken from Frank's **"Famous Funnies"** covers of the early fifties. Each poster comes from a high-fidelity print of the original cover which has had new coloring done by Frazetta himself. They will be available in the very near future for $15 a set from Russ Cochran, Rt. 1, Adel, Iowa. ■

UP, UP, AND AWAY

On the big-screen front: **Columbia Pictures** is planning a wide-screen feature of Superman. Pre-production is now in progress, and showbiz gossip centers have it that current cult star Robert Redford will play the man from Krypton. □

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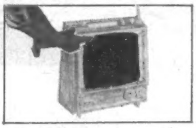
LIVE SATURDAY MORNING BLUES

Some 30% of LA area artists who draw animated cartoons are unemployed because of the new trend in kiddy-TV shows. As a result of the uproar over the violence in Saturday morning cartoons for kids, many of the major networks and independents have gone to predominately live entertainment for the weekend lineups. The result is a severe cutback in animation work.

"This is our time of maximum employment," says union chief Lou Appett. "Last year our members had 100% employment; this year more than 350 are out of work."



If the new trend continues, along with the fact that most movie cartoons are now coming from inventory (too few theaters show them to produce new ones), the day of the screen animator may be over, and the day of big-screen animation 'a la Walt Disney' a thing of the past. □

MORE ON THE CODE

At the same Friar's Club dinner last Nov. 13, the CMAA also awarded the publishers of code-approved comics with a citation of merit. The citation reads:

Stan the Man

Twentieth Anniversary Award of the Comics Magazine Association of America—Presented to [name] for his Dedicated Adherence to the CMAA Code to Maintain a High Standard of Morality in Comics Magazines.

Recipients were: John L. Goldwater, **Archie Comics**; Martin Goodman, **Seaboard Periodicals**; Leon Harvey, **Harvey Comics**; Carmine Infantino, **National Periodical Publications**; Stan Lee, **Marvel Comics**; and John Santangelo Jr., **Charlton Comics**.

Of interest is the fact that to that time Seaboard had published no comics and that editor Jeff Rovin in earlier statements had worried about possible trouble with the comics code people. □

DISNEY REPRINTS AVAILABLE

Dell, which has been publishing various Walt Disney-oriented comics for the past 30 years, has come out with a series of Golden Reprints that reproduce some of the best Walt Disney stories of the past 40 years. Presented in a uniform format, there are currently four books available in the set. The first, and earliest, is a Mickey Mouse adventure (with the Black Bat) from 1934; the remaining three are "Ducks" (two Donalds, one Uncle Scrooge) from the inimitable Carl Barks. All four books have fine four-color repro

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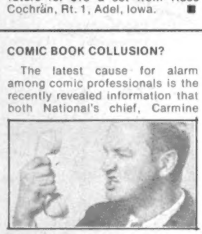
and all have an introduction which tells a short history of the story and its artist. They are available for $1.50 each from the **Dell Publishing Company**. □

COMIC BOOK COLLUSION?

The latest cause for alarm among comic professionals is the recently revealed information that both National's chief, Carmine



Infantion, and Marvel's head, San Lee, have inaugurated a sort of hot-line system among themselves. It seems that when an employee leaves one company to join another, his former bosses call and give specific information regarding his salary, jobs, capabilities, etc. This means that the new company won't find themselves in the position of overpaying a new man on the basis of a raise over the amount he says he was making. It also conjures up possibilities of an antitrust action against the two comic giants. This is a rather obvious case of collusion, and is certainly an abridgement of individual rights. □

NEWSPAPER STRIPS IN TROUBLE

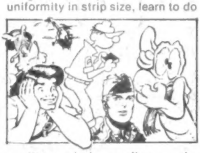
Newspaper comics face a "hazardous future," in addition to their "worrisome present," because of the all-time high newsprint prices and skyrocketing publishing costs.

"There's grave danger that publishers will go even farther than they already have in reducing the space alloted to comics," Phillip Love, columnist and former feature editor of the **Washington Post**, told the **Newspaper Comics Council** at the **Museum of Cartoon Art** in Connecticut.

Conceding that there are now more comic readers than ever before (more than 140 million, according to a recent **King Features** poll), Love also said that there were as many comics as before, but that the size of the strips, and their promotion, had gone "way down."

"What too many publishers have forgotten," Love said, "is that the comics began as a device to sell newspapers." If publishers knew the history of comics, Love continued, if they appreciated their value in attracting and holding readership, and if "they had the perceptiveness and imagination of a William Randolph or a Joseph Patterson, we would have nothing to worry about. But, in the immortal words of George Gobel, you can't hardly find them kind no more."

What the comics creators must do is take an active interest in upgrading their image and the image of their product, insist in uniformity in strip size, learn to do



quality work in smaller panels, and upgrade the personal image of themselves in reference to their historical image.

"This sort of thing not only hooks readers. It just might cause some publishers to think twice—and twice more—of the folly of committing any more mayhem in their comics sections," Love declared. □

Comic Books In The Library

by Will Eisner

The comics magazine, or as it is more popularly known, the comic book medium, having come of age on the American cultural scene, must measure up to its responsibilities.

Their record of progress and continuing improvement compares favorably with other media. An outstanding example is the development of comic books as a unique and effective tool for instruction and education.

Excerpted from the Preamble of the Code of the Comics Magazine Association of America, Inc.

COMICS as we know them are modern versions of the oldest art form. Their pictures-in-sequence format, employing the technique of man's earliest recorded communication, is a visual form of language.

COMICS AS COMMUNICATION

Long before the invention of the alphabet, which depends on readers' ability to memorize its code, sequential pictures were used to record knowledge and communicate man's experiences, either real or imaginary. The earliest of these pictorial recordings were found on walls of prehistoric caves. Later, hieroglyphics, a system of pictorial characters which was the comic strip's forerunner, served developing civilizations. The development of papyrus led to a portable, duplicatable, and storable mass communicator—printed decodable symbols on paper.

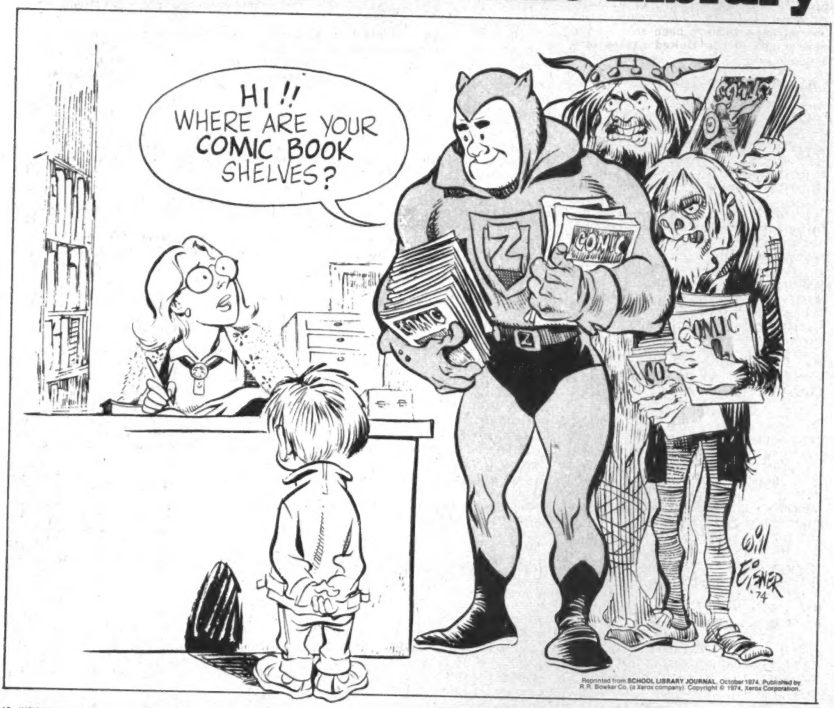
As ideas and notation skills developed, narrative artists found great patrons: the kings in the Orient, and the church in the Western world. The latter, a proselytizing force, had a pressing need to reach masses of unlettered people.

Wider channels of communication were opened to the common man in the early 15th-Century when the sequential narrative, or comic strip, appeared in Germany as "broadsheets" or **Bilderbogen.** These were pictures and picture stories printed from wooden blocks or copper sheets before the advent of movable type. With the sophistication of the printing process, narrative artists found at last the vehicle that would serve them for the next 700 years or more.

There was much to tell and sequential pictures were used to tell it. Messages and concepts were too urgent to be left to more formal texts, and the sequential art form, which could so successfully communicate on a broad scale, was patronized. (There is a lesson here for modern educators.)

COMIC BOOK STIGMA

Perhaps because it was easily embraced by the less educated, sequential art encompassed earthy subject matter. For masses of people, stories of the agonies of saints, social and



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political satire, and visualizations of private fantasies formed the basis of the literature. Narrative art, relegated to serving the masses, was considered vulgar by the intellectual elite, who often try to preserve literary **form** at the expense of the **substance.**

EVOLUTION OF THE COMIC BOOK

The newspaper industry exploded in America in 1900. The daily comic strip appeared in the late 1920's, and motion pictures and photography came fast on its heels. Newspaper comic strips, telling continuing stories of adventure, were, by 1937, published in magazines called "comic books"—at a time when human idealism was being attacked by rising dictatorships.

As comic books began to assume a historic role in the development of sequential picture narration, strip writers devoted themselves to anti-crime subjects, patriotism, morality stories, and fantasies of retaliation against oppressors and invaders. They created larger-than-life super-heroes for their readers to embrace and found great public acceptance. This ushered in a golden era resulting in mass production of huge quantities of comic material. Over 80 million comic books are reported to have been sold on the newsstnads of the United States in a single year.

COMICS AS A TEACHING TOOL

An early experiment utilized the sequential comic technique in the dramatization of literary classics. One of the first such efforts appeared in 1938, in a short-lived magazine called **Circus.** This was a series visualizing adventures for youth written by a 19th-Century author, Charles Lever. Another series, based on Dumas' **The Count of Monte Cristo**, was syndicated for newspapers. These early examples of modern educational comics led to the adaptation of series of classics from **The Last of the Mohegans** to Biblical stories in comic format which sold in the millions on newsstands. By combining words and visual impact, the printed sequential story accomplished what it could do best: teach by conveying ideas quickly.

VERSATILITY IN INSTRUCTIONAL COMICS

During World War II, the need for instantly trained mechanics, gunsmiths, equipment operators, and other specialists, and the availability of trained sequence-picture artists were joined. Introduced early in the war by the Pentagon, instructional materials in comic book format were published about military courtesy and the care and maintenance of equipment—everything from how-do-do-it to preventive maintenance. Strips were also valuable as recruitment material and in teaching the fundamentals of military trade to illiterates from the ghettos and backwoods of America.

Instructional comics were an important development and the success of this type of training program encouraged its continuance. When the Korean War began, the Department of Defense reissued a World War II publication, formerly called **Army Motors**, as **p.s. magazine,** complete with full color comic strips and lavish use of sequential visuals.

Since 1938, Will Eisner has been in the vanguard of educational applications of the comic book format. An internationally syndicated author-cartoonist, Eisner's works include a unique series of sequential training booklets, instructing foreign nationals in the care and operation of military equipment, farming procedures, and social concepts, now being used by AID (Agency for International Development), the United Nations, and the Department of Defense.

In 1950, Eisner founder P.S. Magazine and during the next two decades produced instructional comics for major industrial firms. He is also the creator of "Job Scene," a series of career guidance comic booklets now widely used in schools and government employment agencies, and the syndicated "Spirit" comics.

Eisner holds three National Cartoonists' Society awards and was named to the Hall of Fame of the Comic Book Academy. He is a member of the faculty of the School of Visual Arts in New York City and is the president of IPD Publishing Co., Inc. He is presently working on a sociological history of the comics and is advising the Reading Institute of New York University on the use of the comics medium.

INCREASED COMIC BOOK USAGE

The use of comic books for instructional purposes was expanded after 1950. Industry utilized this communication form, as did church groups, political parties, and social agencies. This coincided with extensive buying of entertainment comics—millions were sold on the newsstands and billions were printed.

In 1967, yet another breakthrough occurred. The U.S. Department of Labor, in its search for reading devices to attract school dropouts, commissioned a comic book. In its support of behavioral sciences, the department provided a grant which resulted in a series called **Job Scene**, designed to introduce vocations to young people, particularly the disadvantaged. This series is now widely used in schools, state employment centers, and job counseling agencies.

Comics are presently undergoing changes. Serial strips devoted to adventure are disappearing from newspapers. Today's newspaper strip encourages quick reading and instant humor without the need for reading yesterday's installment. Adventure stories are mainly found on newsstands. The over-the-counter comics are reaching new readers with social and "adult" themes. Elsewhere, underground comics are feeding our subcultures.

"COMIC" LANGUAGE

The significance of comics as a training device is perhaps not so much the use of time-honored sequential art as the language accompanying the pictures. For example, **P.S. Magazine**, composed largely of information existing in the formal texts of the **Technical Manuals (TMS)**, employed the soldier's argot, rendering militarese into common language. The magazine said, "Clean away the crud from the flywheel," instead of "All foreign matter should be removed from the surface of the flywheel and rubber belt which it supports." Whereas the **Technical Manual** used over a hundred words to describe the procedure and manner of holding the flywheel in the left hand while cleaning it (with full specifications of the tool to be used), **P.S.** showed a visual sequence consisting of three panels which **instantly** depicted the necessary information and explained the complete operation in the accompanying

balloons.

P.S. Magazine survived early resistance by traditionalists and became a respected instrument. It has been in use for over 24 years, and continues to be successful. With a monthly printing of 200,000 copies and circulation from military unit libraries (at least five readers per copy), **P.S. Magazine** has been invaluable in training some ten million soldiers. This impact on a generation's reading habits cannot be ignored.

The series widely used in counseling youth, **Job Scene**, has proved so successful that several publishers now produce similar material. This further underscores the excellent record achieved when sequential-picture technique is combined with vocabulary which speaks in **the reader's terms!**

Critics of comics have complained that while educators are trying to teach the proper use of language, comic books and strips are violating every rule. This is an understandable criticism, but it is based on the assumption that cartoons are designed primarily to teach language. **Comics are a message in themselves!**

Characters' words spoken in overhead balloons are precise. They promote imagery and realism and have the economy of a telegram. The balloon language of comics is a soundtrack rather than a documentation. Word expressions emerging from the changing patterns of our lives are quickly assimilated and recycled.

New words and phonetic mutants enliven and broaden our lexicon. **"Pow! Zap! Bam!"** enrich articulation in a real world that sometimes confounds standard usage. "Good English" out of the mouth of a comic character caught in a cataclysmic situation would be unbelievable to the reader. To readers living in the ghetto and playing in the street and the school yard, comic books with their inventive language, argot, and slang serve as no other literature does.

COMIC BOOKS IN SCHOOLS

Comic books have appeared in school systems since 1948. Emanating from industry of special interests, they have been used as supplemental or enrichment material. The traditional resistance by educators to the use of comics as a formal teaching tool is now changing.

Indeed, it is remarkable that reading teachers have been slow in adopting this inviting material. Armed with sophisticated diagnostic techniques and working under the demands of accountability, teachers now seem ready to employ the existing unorthodox comic book for instruction purposes.

Two recent articles strongly support educators' growing appreciation of the comic book's teaching power. Calling comics "conduits to culture," one writer points out that the structure of the school system requires that it operate as an "agency of social functions to promote **desirable** social attitudes." Textbook publishers, "acceding to the wishes of those who purchase their products," therefore produce pleasant, inoffensive but often really unenjoyable material for the student." Another scholar states that "the comic medium offers reading materials which schools and their libraries cannot adequately emulate."

USING COMIC BOOKS WITH CHILDREN

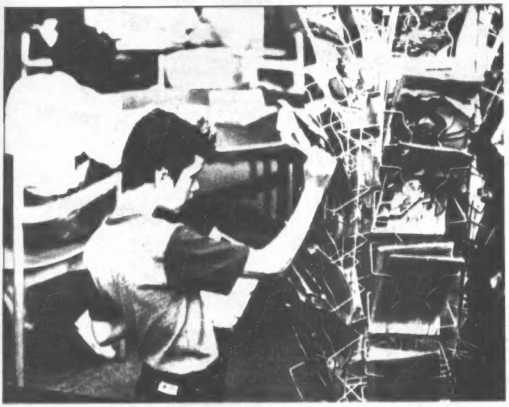
In schools, comic strip reprints are reaching reluctant readers who are either unresponsive or hostile to traditional books. At the School of Visual Arts in New York, a team of students is currently working with the Reading Institute of New York University to develop comic books aimed at teenaged dyslexics and problem readers. These comics artists and writers, guided by educators at the Institute, are developing prototype literature which will mitigate reader alienation encountered in many conventional "easy reading" books. They seek to provide a high protein reading diet, rich in motivation and laced with sweet achievement. It is hoped that this will stimulate appetites and fortify the reader's digestion of formal texts.

Certain qualities distinctive to comic books support their educational importance. Perhaps their most singular characteristic is **timeliness**. Comics appeal to readers when they deal with "now" situations or treat them in a "now" manner. Working in a high speed transmission, the author faces instant acceptance or rejection. He or she is writing for a transient audience who are in a hurry to savor vicarious experiences. Loyalties are to the characters themselves, so the need for imaginative storytelling is great. Equally vital is the choice of terms. The reader's instant recognition of symbols and concepts challenges the ingenuity and empathy of comic book creators. Writers working with both imagery and words cannot afford the luxury of complex analogies. They deal with precise situations that mirror life situations or acted-out fantasies. Comic symbolism is not abstract. The vivid portrayal of acts of violent human conflict are as necessary to the fabric of a modern comic book story as to the resolution of the plot in Beowulf or "Hansel and Gretel."

COMICS IN THE LIBRARY

The newsstand comic book is infiltrating the school system and is now looking for a place in the school library. School librarians can serve a very important role implementing comics. What, then, is the involvement of the school library?

Since there are nearly 100 individual comic-book titles published by major newsstand comic houses in the United States, selection is important. These houses include Marvel Comics, National Comics, Dell Comics, Gold Key, Harvey Comics, Archie Comics, King Features, Charlton Comics, Warren Publications, Skywald and Classic Comics. In addition, there are probably more than thirty comics emanating from so-called underground houses. This list omits church groups and special interests whose products are not marketed on newsstands where reader choice determines popularity. Obviously, it is difficult to select from this torrent of material



"Batman? Spiderman? Archie? In the library????"

We ignore those appalled reactions to our comic book collection, mostly because nothing succeeds like success. The comics get read and reread until they're ragged. We haven't figured out the cost-per-circulation (or in-house reading) but it has to be ridiculously low.

Acquisition of comics, as well as the other aspects of the funnies collection, is a very casual affair. It wouldn't make sense to get involved in paperwork for such ephemera. We order from a local magazine distributor by general type (super-hero, western, romance, war, weirdo, etc.) and dollar amount. After the comics arrive, we verify cost and amount for the business office and pile the new shipment in the racks with the old. The rack was supplied to us by the distributor at the outset when it was obvious that we were going to be good, regular customers. We do not stamp, label, catalog our comics and do not advise others to do so. There always seems to be more comics around than we thought we had. The theory is that in addition to the gifts presented to us formally, some of the kids are just anonymously donating their old comics to our collection. One of those self-regenerating things.

Why comic books? Because the kids are **reading** them. Do we need any other justification? If they were reading cereal boxes, that would be the most sensible thing to fill the YA department with.—**Jan Ballard and Christine Kirby, Young Adult Department, Orlando Public Library, Florida, from their booklet, "The Care and Feeding of Young Adults." Photo: Orlando Public Library.**

ranging in quality from awful to excellent.

School librarians can make a start by obtaining distributor's catalogs from local newsstands. Comic book publishers will gladly furnish lists of their titles. The Comics Code Authority, 41 E. 42nd Street, New York, is an excellent source for documentation and historical data and bulletin board material for teachers. The Library of Congress has the largest collection of comics in the country and frequently mounts exhibits. Another source is the extensive comics library of Yale University. Recently a Museum of Cartoon Art opened in Greenwich, Connecticut (384 Fieldpoint Rd.).

STANDARDS

The following standards are suggested:

- Quality of writing and artistic style.
- Level of **interest** (not capability) of readers.
- Relevance to popular subjects found in literature.
- Imaginativeness and innovation.

In the selection of material, the major criterion is **relevance** to readers' identified interests. Comics generally divide into two recognizable groups. There are the "heavies," which contain heroic fantasy—titles including sword-and-sorcery subjects, superheroes, war stories, and jungle adventures. Then there is "lighter" material offering romance stories, comedy, teenage adventure, and other youth-oriented material.

Established publishers adhere, for the most part, to a self-policing code and endeavor to conform to established guidelines. Comics in your library should focus on the kind of story matter that could stimulate the pursuit of more sophisticated reading material. Remember, you are dealing with innovative and often experimental material. Those comics with high popularity will alert you to trends. Be wary of comparing them with other literature for determining quality. Their effectiveness to current teaching problems is a better measuring stick. Within this framework,

Will Eisner, president of IPD Publishing Co., still fights a never-ending battle for truth, justice, and the American comic tradition. Thanks, Willy!

one can select eminently readable books in the comic field that will suit libraries.

A good comic story must have an exciting layout and novel characterization. The plot is secondary to visual impact, but ideas are important.

Because most comics are produced by teams of writers and artists, the text has had considerable independent attention, sometimes necessitating compromise with the artwork. Hand-lettered "balloons" are a unique reading sequence requiring familiarity with the medium.

While the partnership of writer and artist cannot always guarantee the best plot structure, the separate parts are often stronger than the whole. This is admittedly a weakness that offers educators a problem in selection.

Perhaps the most exciting challenge of all is that school librarians can influence the quality of comics. The inclusion of comics in school libraries is not lost on publishers and comic book creators. Acting not as censors but as resourceful guides, librarians can become a powerful catalyst in providing teachers with diverse selections of new and better comic books.

Certainly librarians can get involved in finding and acquiring acceptable comic books. Their active participation will encourage writers and artists, and influence publishers to respond to the current needs of the educational community.

"Meanwhile..." (as we say in comic books), there are good comics available on the newsstands for reading pleasure and instruction, and for circulation in your libraries. □

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The Comics Code

20 Years Of Self Strang-ulation? Part 2

by Ed Summer

Last issue I.C. examined the current opinions of the Comics Code by the leading publishers of comics. This issue we conclude our article on the Code by interviewing two men who witnessed the beginning of the Code. First is Dr. Fredric Wertham, emminent psychiatrist, who some regard as the instigator of the Code and second, Jerry DeFuccio, Associate Editor of MAD, who remembers the disastrous effects of the birth of the Code.

Jerry DeFuccio (above), associate editor of MAD MAGAZINE, draws a head on Dr. Fredric Wertham, author of seduction of the INNOCENT and WORLD OF FANZINES...two men who fought on opposing sides during the turbulent birth of the Comics Code.

At the center of the cyclone of controversy about the comics code is one man: Dr. Fredric Wertham. Some people regard him as saintlike; some think of him as a catalyst; others view him as an instigator with almost supernaturally evil importance. There is, however, no doubt that his testimony before the Kefauver sub-committee hearings and his 1953 book, SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT, brought comic books into the public eye.

In this interview, conducted by telephone on June 12, 1974, Dr. Wertham expesses his present-day feelings about the formation of the code and the comic book world of 20 years ago.

SUMMER: What were the positive contributions of the comic code to comic book publishing?

WERTHAM: Let me say this: I have no special reason to discuss the Comics Code. I had nothing to do with it whatever. I talk about it merely to be helpful to this article, because I was asked. Otherwise, I wouldn't comment on comic books or the code at all.

Briefly, I should first say how I got mixed up in comic books in the first place. In the late 1930's, I was a director of the largest mental hygiene clinic in the country, and later on I was party in three other mental hygiene clinics at the same time. This included Bellevue, another in Queens, and an emergency clinic.

My work is primarily psychotherapy. I examine people, help them, and treat them. Sometimes, my assistants drew

Illustration by Richard Bonitz

my attention to the fact that some kids prefer comic books. Some of these kids were normal, some were delinquents, there were all kinds. But the comic books affected their daydreams and their developments in various ways.

It went on all the time, but I paid very little attention to it. Gradually it turned out that we got interested in it. We were trying to study all the different factors affecting the troubled child. So we came across causes people don't like to mention: race prejudice, poverty, bad institutions, lack of medical care for physical problems. Suddenly some of my assistants began to say this has to do with comic books, this was where the patient got these ideas. So then we studied comics, and, finally, I made a very complete study of mass media.

Now, comics are just a part of mass media. I came to comics in that context. Before my studies, no one had paid any attention to mass media at all. They said that everything was heredity, or that the child was born wrong in the first place, or that some special ethnic groups have specific problems. So "media" was a new thing. I did some very careful clinical work with a lot of assistants. Finally, I came to the conclusion that **some** crime comic books have an effect on children which is not entirely healthful. Particularly the saturation of children's minds with images of cruelty, brutality, violence and sadism.

What happened—and I have never spoken or written about this unless I was asked—was that people would ask me to talk about this, give a lecture, do an article. It turned out that the easiest mass medium to study was comic books. If I see a child of nine or ten and we ask him what he does at home, and he says he has about 50 comic books that he reads over and over again, we can ask him to bring in the comic books for us to see.

It's almost impossible to do that with movies, which we've studied. Television hadn't begun yet—at least not widely. At the present moment, these careful, clinical studies we did then can't be done anymore because today's kids see so much television you can't disentangle it anymore You can't distinguish it anymore. Moreover, you can't see all the television programs. But we could see all the comics that these kids brought us. We had quite a collection, and that was before comic book collecting existed. These kids very gladly gave us these comic books. They were very pleased we were interested.

People have erected a "straw man" named "Dr. Fredric Wertham," and I hardly recognize him. He is supposed to hate comic books; he is supposed to be for censorship; he is supposed to say all comic books are bad. But that's all ridiculous. For all that has happened, I am primarily interested in people.

But I have to admit that the Comics Code is, very indirectly—without anybody talking to me, without my even suggesting it or wanting it—the result of my work. But I never wanted it.

Now the first public statement I made about it was in a court hearing in Washington. I testified under oath **against** censorship, defending publications that had nothing to do with comic books. Some of these were nudist publications which were completely harmless as far as I'm concerned, not very pornographic.

In the courtroom, somebody asked me: "You made some remarks about comic books." And I said: "Comic books are not a matter of sex. That's violence!" I explained that violence is something harmful, something that didn't occur in these nudist publications. This was my argument.

I have been in many anti-censorship trials, by the way. I was the first psychintrist in the United States admitted in federal court as an expert on censorship back in 1928. It was a trial about **DAPHNUS AND CHLOE** which they now read in colleges. In those days, they wouldn't even print the whole

thing. Something very sexual would be put in Latin. But I got that book free because I was against censorship. At that time, it took a great deal of courage to stand up. People didn't want a psychiatrist to speak about that subject at all.

Which brings us back to that "strawman" who is supposed to be for censorship. This is ridiculous. An example of one man who endorsed my studies after **SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT** was Spektowsky, the original editor of PLAYBOY. He certainly wouldn't have endorsed it if I was for censorship.

Now I come to the code. I never asked for anything like it. What I suggested at that time was that we had ample clinical proof that children under 13 are adversely affected by mass media—including comic books which feature all these kinds of cruelty and brutality. They lose their sense of the dignity of human life and the suffering of other people. I felt that we should protect children until 13 or 14 so this kind of thing was not shown to them directly.

In other words, two accomplishments of mine were to change exposure of these things to children. And that a complete difference should be made between children under 13 and adults.

Maybe a child of 14 is still a child. I don't say everybody who is 14 is mature. But the point is that this was endorsed in another trial by Judge Frankfurter of the Supreme Court who specifically stated that young children are stimulated by a lot of cruelty and violence and bloodshed. But the important point is that he said it was **partly** responsible for delinquent behavior.

Nobody that knows could say that a comic book **causes** delinquency. Yet you read over and over again that Wertnam says comic books cause murder. I never said that. I said that it was **one** of the factors. It's like any illness people have. We don't know exactly what causes it, but we know certain things that contribute to it.

SUMMER: Do you feel that the code represented a type of censorship?

WERTHAM: I don't agree with that at all. I'll tell you what the code is to my mind and I'd like to quote a real expert—Roy Thomas: "The Comic Code Authority is not a foreign body imposing outside rule on the industry, but a part of the industry itself." An industry merely rules for themselves. Any industry does that.

The result of my book was that parents looked at comic books for the first time. I know many people and teachers who had no idea what was in them. In fact, it's very difficult to read all those comics even for research purposes. I wasn't even interested in the beginning.

Was it necessary to have the Code or do something? Let me give you another expert quote about the violence. Steranko refers to a series—which I won't name because I don't want to single out a publisher—and says "No story was ever finished without ample helpings of shackles, chains, discipline, subjugation, and bondage, enough to please even the most hardened S. & M. disciple." Most of my life was spent in clinics and I saw people who got into terrible trouble through sadistic wishes. Either they do something and they feel guilty about it, or they really hurt a young girl or a boy.

SUMMER: Do you feel the Code has functioned in a way to change the type of material?

WERTHAM: I want to answer that, although it is very difficult. The question you're really asking is, "What influence did the comic code have?" I consider myself a scientist, and I'm careful. Nobody can say definitely what the Comic Code accomplished. Many other things during the same time have changed. Twenty years ago, there was very little violence in movies. Very little. Now when you go to a movie, again and again people tell me: "I had to walk out because I saw so much blood!" In other words, the climate and atmosphere has changed. The second change is the enormous effect of television. Almost every child you see watches it. Comic books have become a minor factor now.

The austere Dr. Wertham whose work during the early 1950's marked the beginning of the Comics Code.

SUMMER: Are the negative things you found in comic books 20 years ago still an important factor in your therapeutic work? Do you find that children are influenced as much by comic books? Or has there been some change in the ways in which a child relates to comics?

WERTHAM: Change in the way children react to comics is definite. It is very interesting. When I did the most important work some 20 years ago, there were practically no collectors of comic books. We had so many comics we would have given them away. But nobody wanted them. Literally. We had them in my office, it was really funny. We were buried in comic books. The "collecting" thing came much later.

Secondly, I believe mass media in general—all of them: movies, television, paperbacks, comic books—have too much violence. I think nobody can understand what happens on the subways or in the streets without taking into account that we live in a society permissive about violence. From that point of view, and if I understand the code correctly, the comic code is much better than the rest of the people.

Now the best thing I can say about the comic code, keeping in mind that I really have no right to discuss it because I'm not in the industry, is that I feel that the Comic Code Authority never said anything that ever happens is really harmful. Not in so many words. They don't say "we forbid it because it's harmful!" My God! Everybody might think they would agree with me. They don't! But I, as a reasonable human being, tell myself everytime that this is implicit in the code. They wouldn't have this code if somehow or other they didn't feel that they had to save the industry against things which other people knew were harmful. I think it's implicit in the code that violence in itself, can be harmful under certain circumstances. It is never a direct influence. It's not like a billiard ball that hits another billiard ball. A child is a complicated thing. Lots of things affect them.

SUMMER: How do you feel about the Warren Publications or the Underground comix which are not members of the code? Especially in the context that the undergrounds contain a great deal of sexually explicit material? How do these books fit into the framework?

WERTHAM: It is difficult to say sexual material—whatever it is, even pornography—has effects either way. Very difficult, especially to check through so much material. As far as underground comics are concerned, they're something totally different. In my book, **THE WORLD OF FANZINES**, I discuss Underground Comix. I feel that they're the reaction to what is happening today.

But this is very interesting in connection with the code. I have this feeling: I'm for freedom, for real freedom and responsible liberty. I know that good comic book artists, artists like Alex Toth, don't need a code. They know that certain things should not be done. If the artist had real freedom, I don't think he would do anything like what was in the Steranko quote. Every once in a while, maybe, but they wouldn't go for week after week after week having only all these violent images.

I think that if we give the good artist real freedom, we don't need codes. I'll give you an example with which I think I can prove it. I came to study fanzines because I was interested in communication, nothing to do with comic books. I made thorough compilations. I probably have the most diverse collection that anybody has of fanzines. Not the biggest, but very diverse: comic fanzines, science

fiction, many kinds. They have No violence. They're completely free. They have no censorship, no code, only freedom.

I have a special section in my book where I say these people are quite different people. They have the complete freedom, but they don't depict this brutality. I mean very, very rarely. I have a whole collection of what they say against violence. One of the fanzines has an interview with Alex Toth. Toth describes how he was doing a story that he was asked to illustrate. He was supposed to draw a man who is tied to a table and rats are eating him. He wouldn't do it. He said he got himself out of it. Now there are artists who are sadistic, but Toth isn't. **HE** was able to get out of it, but there are many young artists who have no chance **NOT** to do what is expected of them.

Surrounded by the comforts of his Pennsylvania home, Dr. Wertham digests the latest addition to his growing collection of fanzines.

SUMMER: What you're indicating is that given a certain amount of freedom, at least as evidenced in the fan publications, people will arrive at a somewhat reasonable state of things themselves, rather than just reacting to the freedom by taking advantage of it and being extreme. Do you feel that a comics code will continue to be necessary, or that people will police themselves and make external controls a thing of the past?

WERTHAM: I can't say that this will happen. Our atmosphere at present is so violent, so permissive. I'm speaking of actual violence, not the images. Everything is permitted. When you go to the movies, they glorify violence. They show you how wonderful it is to kill people, to torture people. Right now, many young people who want to do comic books are affected by this kind of permissiveness.

I speak of an artist in an ideal way, an artist who grows up in a normal non-violent society. I can't possibly see that the United States is that at the present time. I think the thing is getting much worse. All this is quite apart from comic books. This state of society has nothing to do with it. A good artist like Alex Toth, who is an older man, has a very great understanding of the comic strip continuity aesthetics: he doesn't give in to things that he doesn't believe in. But you can't expect a young man of 19 or 20 not to be affected. He thinks this is what he HAS to do.

SUMMER: How do you feel about so-called "necessary violence" such as war or self-defense? Do you believe, indeed, that there is such a thing as "necessary violence"?

WERTHAM: This question comes up with me very often. The question is: "What IS necessary violence?" In the U.S. at present, unfortunately, so many people are in extreme states brought on by bad social conditions that they think that the only way to help themselves is violence. They feel there is no other way. The difficulty is that our communications are clogged, very little comes out. Everything that you write or that you say is censored. So some people say: "The thing is so bad that the only chance I have to free my people is to make a violent act to stir up the people!"

Shall I say that this violence is necessary? I have examined quite a number of murderers in my lifetime. The man will go on to say: "How else would you express it. What would you do? I haven't got enough money to get a full-page advertisement in the **N. Y. TIMES**, and if I did, it probably wouldn't have any affect anyway." So that's very difficult. As far as war is concerned, that is a very difficult question. We live in a time where the danger of a nuclear war is very, very great.

I must tell you this to make my point clear, quite apart from comic books. I have studied violence as such in the individual and the collective. I came to a very controversial conclusion. I've seen the worst kind of people. I've seen the worst sexual murderers. I HAD to examine them. I was the director of the court clinic and saw murderers every day. I still believe that human violence is not necessary in the long run. I don't think we are born violent. I believe it can be abolished if we abolish all the factors. At least if we have people live in decent social conditions, no one would have to dream of what Patty Hearst did in order to improve their lot. And, of course, the violence is also in our law enforcement agencies. Attica and Kent State and all these things are terribly violent things. I think that eventually we will get past these things, but I won't be alive to see it.

It's a bad thing to say that violence is an instinct and we'll always have it. That I think is the wrong thing. But now we are far from the comics code.

The best thing that I can say about the comic code is the fact that publishers seem to agree with me: that in certain mass media, violence can be harmful to people. Therefore, let's tone it down. Most thoughtful people now agree with me that the saturation of the minds of susceptible young people with violent images doesn't make them any gentler.

Jerry DeFuccio, currently associate editor of MAD magazine, viewed the formation of the comics code as a member of the E.C. staff, the place where the Senator from Arkansas concentrated. His comments describe the last days of a disheartened E.C. staff and the early birth pangs of the code itself.

SUMMER: Now that you've had 20 years to observe the code in action, what positive effects do you think it has had?

DeFUCCIO: Negativism set in the day the code was installed, and from then on, it was a whole anti-climax. When the code was instituted, it emasculated the comic books and a lot of dynamic artists got out of the field and either went into the hardware business or back to advertising or doing story boards.

SUMMER: What negative effects did the code appear to have when it was first formed?

DeFUCCIO: The whole concept of there being a seal on the top of the cover implied a very juvenile content: there's nothing wrong inside here, this is okay for you. That's a turn-off in itself. I believe that publishing houses should have a sense of good taste and a sense of themselves. I know that at D.C. Sheldon Mayer had a whole list of "DON'TS" that seemed to become ingrained into the company. I don't think that anybody transgressed against those precepts.

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Was the Man of Steel really a steel...?

Fighting City Hall!

Ever since the dawn of civilized authority it has been an axiom that you "can't fight City Hall." That anyone who attempts to thwart the "big boys," the giants of industry, the untouchables of commerce was in for a tough and impossible time. This has also been true of the comics companies. The little guys, the writers, the artists, have been taken advantage of since the inauguration of the comic field. Their brains have been picked, their talents prostituted, for the sole cause of gaining more money and power to the big conglomerate corporations.

One man is fighting back. One man, Jerry Siegal, creator of Superman; the biggest, most important, most influential character in the history of the comics, is taking the fight to the big companies. But his fight is unsupported; it is, in fact, unknown to the general public. In respect for this little guy, and for all the little guys like him, we present this statement from Jerry, where he makes his plea. Read on, and think of what this little guy has gone through:

Statement to Comics Fans
From Jerry Siegel

"I urge anyone, who has ever enjoyed SUPERMAN, not to buy any NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS, INC. comic books containing SUPERMAN, SUPERBOY or imitations of those comic strips. I also urge that letters be written to NATIONAL PERIODICALS, protesting the way NATIONAL ruined the careers of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, originators of SUPERMAN. SUPERMAN is a character who fights evil. It is ironic that NATIONAL should have used evil, illegal methods to destroy the careers of Joe and me as creators of SUPERMAN. Joe and I would appreciate the moral support of SUPERMAN fans in this matter concerning the ruination of our lives and careers by NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS, INC."

In deference to the big guy, knowing that at times the big corporation is also right, we at Inside Comics contacted National Periodical Publications and asked them for their statement regarding the Siegel letters. This is their reply:

"There is currently litigation between Jerry Siegel and N.P.P. On the advice of attorneys, it is not proper to discuss the merits of the case that is currently before the courts. Mr. Siegel should know this. However, we can say that Jerry Siegel has instituted repeated law suits against N.P.P. over a period of many, many years on the same subject, and in each and every one of these actions, Mr. Siegel has lost.

The big guy against the little guy. Who is right? Who is wrong? You decide.

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May We Have The Next Slide Please?

by C.C. Beck

As I write I have before me several comic books, some old, some new. The old ones are Captain Marvel Adventures 28 (October 1943) and Master Comics 33 (December 1942).

Captain Marvel, people tell me today, was one of the greatest comic characters of all time. I was never told this back in the days when I was illustrating the stories about the World's Mightiest Mortal, for Fawcett didn't like to let their artists get too much credit for their work. Whatever fan letters came in the mail was read by editors, who also talked to fans who called in person now and then. Fawcett didn't believe in telling artists like myself what was going on; it was no business of mine any more than it was of the engraver or the printer, they believed. Besides, I might have gotten a swelled head and asked for more pay!

As I look at the old Captain Marvel stories I see page after page of people walking around, talking, thinking, sweating and doing other interesting but hardly earth-shattering things. In the lead story, Captain Marvel doesn't do anything until page 6, when he knocks out some Nazis.

Quite different are today's comic books. In one of the more recent books the cover shows a hero in a horned helmet and holding a spear and a sword and either screaming or having an attack of asthma—it's hard to say which. A girl, twisted all out of shape, lies between his sandalled feet. A pair of hands holding something or other looms in the foreground. In the background is a wall of dead bodies and monsters, over which winged demons fly, screaming. "To The Death!" screams the copy.

Inside, the hero is still screaming as he stands over the twisted girl again in the title splash. Then he screams continuously as he slashes, leaps, plunges about, and seems to be having a series of fits that distort his muscles and bones almost to the breaking point. Finally everyone seems to be dead except the hero, who staggers away muttering to himself. A little block of copy says "Finis." It was good of the editor to put that in. Nobody would have known the story was over without it. The other new comics are similar, or even worse.

The old Master Comics contains stories featuring Capt. Marvel Jr., Bulletman, Minute Man, and others. Capt. Marvel Jr., just like Captain Marvel, doesn't go into action until page 6, when he also knocks out some Nazis. He never screams, his muscles never bulge, in fact he barely opens his mouth even when he talks.

Bulletman and Minute Man, however, fly all over the place punching crooks, yelling, distorting their bodies just the way modern heroes do. The pages of the Minute Man story are filled with circular panels, vignettes, overlapping panels and other eye-catching devices. Yet nobody today remembers Minute Man at all.

What did Captain Marvel and Capt. Marvel Jr. have that other comic heroes didn't? The answer must be, simply, better stories. The artwork was often pretty bad, but it managed to tell the stories to the readers. The readers of Golden Age stories got caught up in them and couldn't put them down until they had come to their exciting conclusions. They were not conscious of the drawings, any more than the audience at a good movie is conscious of the background music or the photography.

There was seldom, in Captain Marvel stories especially, any "beautiful artwork." As chief artist I directed all the lay-out of Captain Marvel pages, which were pencilled and inked by other artists. I believed that readers saw our pictures only out of the corners of their eyes while reading the copy. I didn't try to make them gasp with admiration at elaborately detailed backgrounds or elaborately muscled figures in outlandish poses. I had nothing to do with Capt. Marvel Jr. and Mary Marvel pages, but Mac Raboy, Jack Binder, and the host of others who handled these characters

believed pretty much as I did that good stories, well illustrated, were what the readers wanted—not books filled with little masterpieces of art. Raboy drew beautifully, but he also illustrated well. He told his story first, then threw in his fine drawings as a bonus.

Fawcett, knowing full well that Captain Marvel was their star while Mary and Junior were secondary characters, always gave the best stories to The Big Red Cheese, as Sivana called him. Today's comic stories are plays, nothing more. Before you can stage a successful play you must have a good script written by a good playwright. Nothing is worse than a comic book, a play, or a movie where all the actors run around aimlessly, screaming and doing meaningless bits of action which lead nowhere. No amount of fancy backgrounds, elaborate costuming and overdone acting will save a play with a bad story—or with no story at all.

When young fans ask me what I think of today's comics I admit that I just can't manage to get through one. There may be good stories in them, but I am so overwhelmed by all the tricky page layouts and the startling displays of anatomy and technique that I get museum fatigue after about three pages. There's too much artwork!

"But don't you admire fine art?" fans ask.

"Not particularly," I tell them. "You can find all the fine art you want in museums and galleries. Why don't you go to art shows instead of buying comic books?"

"Oh, we'd never do **that!**" the kids snort. "That kind of art is for old ladies and men who walk funny. We love comic books."

"How are the stories in today's comics?" I ask.

"Well, not so hot. The stories in the old comics were better," the fans say.

Do you know what comic stories really are? They're slide shows. There is perhaps nothing on earth more boring than an hour's showing of slides in the home of a friend who has just come back from a trip with pictures taken with his new, expensive camera. This friend also has a new, expensive projector to show his slides with and he assures you that you will be amazed at how professional a show he will give you.

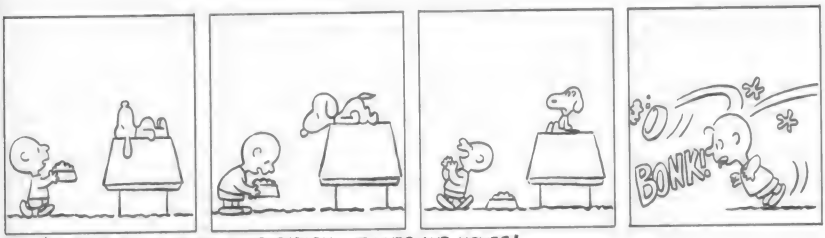
But he never does. His slides are out of focus, off-center, and—worst of all—out of sequence. "Here we are at ... oh no! I don't know what that picture is. Here's the next slide. Oops, I got that one upside down. Oh, this one shows us coming off the boat. Where's the one that shows us starting out?" And so you are forced to sit watching slide after slide of your friend and his companions standing around, mugging, giggling, posing in front of statues, and so on. There is no action whatsoever. There is no story, just your friend's description of what each slide shows, or doesn't show because he couldn't get everything just right.

If your friend shows home movies instead of slides his travelog will usually be even worse. Now, moving pictures don't really move at all; you just think they do. Movies are merely a series of still pictures presented one after another to give the **illusion** of action; each separate frame is quite frozen in time, just as is each panel in a comic page.

You can get the illusion of action in a comic strip by presenting a series of panels, all about the same size and shape, one after another. Slight changes from panel to panel make the reader think he's actually seeing somebody walking down the street, entering a doorway, coming face to face with some dire threat, fighting it or running away, and the like.

You **don't** get action in a comic strip by jamming together a lot of weirdly-shaped panels so crammed with violent action poses that often feet and arms and other parts of bodies stick out of the borders like bits of clothing from an overstuffed suitcase. You don't get action when you make exciting drawings of dull things. Bad movie makers always use lots of aerial shots and views through keyholes, and to cover up the lack of action of their scripts and actors they swoop their cameras around wildly. They add blaring music and voice-over narrative; montages and superimposed camera shots make the viewer dizzy.

Makers of bad comics put explanatory captions everywhere, and jazz up their page layouts until they look like ads. They airbrush their covers, or make them into puzzling combinations of photos and drawings. They get better paper and better printers and better distributors, but they **don't** get better writers, illustrators and editors.



THIS IS TRUE COMIC STRIP ILLUSTRATION... IT LIVES AND MOVES!

THIS IS NOT! IT'S "ACTION-PACKED"... BUT EACH PANEL IS A SEPARATE BIT OF EYE-CATCHING ART.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

They think they're putting exciting action into their comics but, like your friend with his expensive camera and projector, they're only making everything worse. Their comics are dull and more boring than home movies, because they don't know the correct way to create the illusion of action.

Even if you handle action correctly, it won't mean anything to the reader unless the story shows the effect of the action on characters he can either love or hate. Mobs of strangers, people who happen to be passing by, unidentified petty crooks and robbers are not interesting. Neither are exploding volcanos and falling buildings, unless the reader's favorite hero or villain is in them. Who cares about a bunch of people in costumes running around in all directions as if they were in a madhouse which is on fire during an earthquake which is going on in the middle of a typhoon?

As everyone knows, Captain Marvel outsold even Superman. Then he went out of publication in 1953, for reasons still unknown to me. (Remember, Fawcett never told me anything about what was going on.) After twenty years, for reasons known only to him, the publisher of Superman decided to publish the World's Mightiest Mortal again, right alongside the Man Of Steel who appeared on the cover of the first new magazine pulling back a curtain behind which Billy and Marvel were posing like a couple of actors from a drama school.

I worked on the drawings, for a while. Somehow, things weren't right. The new publisher had Captain Marvel and his family running around fighting petty crooks and unidentified characters, flying hither and thither, cracking bum jokes, knocking over buildings for no apparent reason, and generally making big, fat idiots of themselves.

The new publisher airbrushed my cover drawings and combined my line drawings of Captain Marvel with photographs. He put captions everywhere, and made speeches so long that they had to be broken into several separate balloons. He had me making drawings of dull, unexciting things like kids walking around pulling coaster wagons and old ladies ironing clothes. As there was really nothing happening most of the time in the stories, I was directed to cover up the lack of action by making drawings of speeding trains and racing autos and collapsing buildings.

I gave up. As an illustrator I could, in the old days, make a good story better by "bringing it to life" with drawings. But I couldn't bring the new stories to life no matter how hard I tried. They just lay there on my drawing board like corpses which I was making look pretty for their final burial.

What has happened to the World's Mightiest Mortal since, I'm afraid to ask. Please don't show the next slide, National—unless it says "Finis." □

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Simply send a copy of your fanzine to **GEORGE** at the following address: **INSIDE COMICS,** Attn.: **GEORGE,** 11 West 17 Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

If the fanzine's policy is not to issue review copies, please contact **GEORGE** at the above address with the following information: title of item, price and address where a copy can be purchased.

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For simplicity's sake, all fanzines reviewed are assumed to be 8½" by 11" in size, printed photo-offset or offset, bound by saddle-stitch technique and mailed flat in an envelope. All variations from this "standard" will be noted within the review.

Preceding each review will be a bold-faced legend of information; each legend gives the **FANZINE TITLE** and **NUMBER**; single copy price (subscription rates, if available); page count (interior pages only except where indicated); size (if different from "standard"); frequency (if stated); editor (if known); usage of color; ordering information; general description.

All fanzines are grouped into three broad categories: general interest fanzines; newspaper strip fanzine newspapers; and reprint fanzines.

A FINAL CAVEAT:

Due to the tremendous amount of comic fanzines published each month—and the limited space available—**GEORGE** can **ONLY** review comic fanzines. **GEORGE** regrets it cannot review science fiction, movie or other fan magazines.

GENERAL INTEREST FANZINES

AMAZING WORLD OF DC COMICS #1; $1.50; 48 pages; published bi-monthly; Carl Gafford, editor; four-color covers; order from National Periodical Publication, Inc., / PO Box 118, Radio City Station / New York, NY 10019; National Comics fanzine.

This really isn't a fanzine, and **GEORGE** really shouldn't be reviewing it. But seeing as how it is being publicized as a fanzine, we think you ought to know what you'd be getting if you order it.

Okay, if it isn't a fanzine, what is it? It's simply a publicity arm of National Periodicals. Carmine Infantino is listed as the publisher and Sol Harrison is the Managing Editor. It is, in effect, a DC magazine devoted to DC comics produced by the DC staff. Hardly the definition of a fanzine, a fact you will have to take into account as you read the following description of the contents. It is a certainty that every article in this magazine is slanted and biased, however slightly or unintentional towards the company that is paying the bills. Remember that.

Physically, the magazine is 100 percent professional. Layout is clean and photographs and artwork abound. Guy H. Lillian III interviews Joe Kubert for the magazine's first piece. It's eight pages long and, while heavily slanted towards his DC work, does manage to give a good picture of his career. "Direct Currents" follows and it's a news column that will be outdated by the time you read this. Seven pages. Following that is a two page "article" on the Wonder Woman TV pilot. I question the term "article" because it is mostly devoted to retelling the story, which wasn't that hot anyway. Next is a 6 page article on the history of Superman on television. Nicely done, with many photographs from the TV series.

A ten page Jack Kirby strip intended for the second issue of "In The Days Of The Mob," a Mike Kaluta **SHADOW** centerspread, a page by Sergio Aragones, cartoons and a Joe Kubert **HAWKMAN** back cover comprise the majority of the special art in the issue, although there are many other drawings that accompany the articles and fillers.

These fillers include a "meet the staff" page, "Remembering" in which Sol Harrison conjures up early happenings on the production end of the DC business, a tribute to Bill Finger, a hokey letters column, a 10-20-30 years ago page, part one of "How A Comic Is Created"—detailing the revamping of The Unknown Soldier feature in **STAR SPANGLED WAR STORIES**, a three page recap of the **SUPERMAN** cartoon series episodes and a puzzle page. Cover is by Carmine Infantino and is merely renditions of the faces of many of the DC line up of characters. **—J.W.**

BATMANIA #18; 50c; offset, mimeo and Rito; 27 pages total; side-stapled; Rich Morrissey, editor; order from Rich Morrissey / 55 Claudette Circle / Framingham, MA 01701; Batman fanzine.

Ten years ago, Biljo White started **BATMANIA** to bring together the legions of Batman fans to discuss their hero's comic book exploits. The fan enthusiasm led to the formation of a national network of "Batmanians" with titled officers, regional lieutenants and the whole silly regalia. Interest eventually petered out and the zine died, as fanzines do, perhaps due to revulsion at what television did to the image of the Caped Crusader.

After all this time, **BATMANIA** is back. The trappings of the national organization are gone, but the magazine is very much the same. It contains reviews of recent Batman comics, news of upcoming adventures, Batman trivia, and an article on Archie Goodwin's short but remarkable stint as editor of Detective Comics. There's also an interview with Batman inquisitioner artist Jim Jones. Not surprisingly, the spotlights are of Batman and his retinue. **BATMANIA** is not a particularly impressive looking package, but the fan writing and art are better than average and the zine has a friendly feel to it. Devotees of the Masked Manhunter's adventures will certainly enjoy it. **—A.S.**

BoG #2; 50c; 26 pages; mimeograph; side-stapled; Walt Jaschek, editor; order from Graphic Fantasy & Science Fiction Society (Grafan) / 8764 New Hampshire / St. Louis, MO 63136; article and opinion zine.

BoG stands for "Bastard of Grafan," its title taken from the name of the St. Louis fan organization to which the producers of this magazine belong. The stated purpose of the book is to provide a vehicle for Dev Hanke's column, "Critique of Pure Green."

"Critique," now in its third installment, is a pretentious and muddled attempt to analyze the Green Lantern/Green Arrow series in terms of storytelling theory set down by the author. Hanke conducts his enquiry with the help of classical allusions, a smattering of art history, computer programming lore, and anything else he could pull from his academic background to make himself sound more erudite. His is a lost cause. The letters of comment following Hanke's column are from readers interested in straightforward exposition of their views rather than pseudo-academic smokescreens. They come off far better. Hanke has a few good ideas buried in his literary midden, but one must do a lot of unnecessary digging to find them.

Remaining features in the magazine include an editorial, a reprint of a 1948 discussion by Dr. Fredric Wertham of psychiatry's interaction with literature, and a funny page of satirical "news flashes" about current comics.

BoG is trying to break into the graphic criticism field with a less formal approach than other zines of this type. It has enough in this issue to recommend it, despite Hanke's column. If this is your bag, try a sample copy. **—R.H.**

CAPTAIN CHUCKY'S FVP AND STORIES #7; $1.00; 36 pages; Chuck Fiala, editor; four-color cover; order from Chuck Fiala / 6250 W. 84th St. / Burbank, IL 60459; humorous comic stories.

As fanzines begin to covet the air of professionalism apparent in newsstand magazines, with slick covers, glitzy reproduction techniques and—very often—paid professional contributions, they invariably lose sight of their meaning and their inherent value. They become fan **products** rather than the fruits of fan productivity. Happily, FVP commits none of those sins; the result is a true fanoffort.

All the major contents are comic strips, leading off with Tom Wimbish's "Quincey Quack Da Dopey Duck and His Brainless Cohort, Lester the Loquacious Lima Bean." With a hefty title like that there's just enough room left for a fast six panels of very nice inkwork derivative of underground cartoonists Moscoso and Griffin that culminates in a fart joke. Wimbish is very good and as soon as he stops overworking his panels he'll be a major talent.

Jim Engel stops in next with a cartoony one-pager which is followed by editor Fiala and his funny animal title, Joe Crow. In spite of the fact that Fiala inks like a man with his arm in a cast, Joe Crow rates as the best piece of entertainment in the book. The wise-cracking magpie and his stogey-puffing pal Ribald Rabbit enter the political arena with madcap comic incidents falling left and right.

Wimbish returns to exhibit a chapter of "Northcross" in eight pages of dapper, surreal, provocative and slightly self-indulgent fantasy wherein he manages to use all vertical panels with surprising success.

C. Dixon—whose first name is unknown—follows with "Brother Bolt and the Androids Extraordinaire." Dixon's strip takes a full fourteen pages to tell the tale of a trio of androids who decide to perform police work on their own time when they're turned down by the regular cops. There are flashes of irony and drama in the strip but very little comedy, and Dixon's cartoon style favors a lighter script. The mix of opposing elements doesn't work here.

Fiala closes out his fanzine with a three-page humor treat called "Captain Chucky Meets the Fans." It proves that Chuck's knowledge of the fan scene is sharp and incisive. He is at once keen and cutting in this short gem.

It wouldn't be right to ignore the color cover. It's a four-color job in the cheesiest sense. The colors are applied in the flattest way imaginable and the masks are very sloppily cut. Moreover, the artwork didn't merit the extra expense. But it does show that Fiala is trying to upgrade his fanzine and he's willing to improve by degrees and learn the ropes himself. He isn't someone who simply bankrolls his magazine, he gets down and sweats over it. If things aren't perfect it's because he's a fan doing this for other fans and not to turn a fat capital profit. It's this attitude that permeates FVP and makes it a fun place to gather and pore over what the other fellows are doing. **—B.N.**

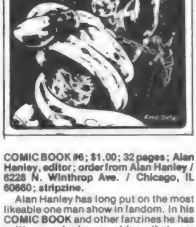
COMIC ART NEWS AND REVIEWS #18-19 and #20; 30c and 15c; (12 issues for $2.25) 16 pages and 8; John Balge, editor; order from: Comic Art News and Reviews / 28 Admiral Road / Kitchener, Ontario / Canada. Fact and opinion fanzine.

This Canadian fact-and-opinion monthly has become one of the best of the fanzines examining the creative side of comic art. **CANAR** consistently offers well-thought-out opinion, meaty articles, and good interviews.

The combination issue, 18-19, is **CANAR**'s finest to date. Two first-class interviews examine the views of young ex-**SHADOW** artist Mike Kaluta and seasoned veteran Gil Kane. Both men are articulate and interesting. Kane, in particular, has many valuable insights about the artistic and commercial aspects of working in comics. Running both interviews in the same issue was a fine move on the editor's part. One can learn much just by comparing the approaches of the newcomer and the pro of long standing.

CANAR also returns to the magazine's usual 8-page length, most of which is taken up by an analysis of the Gold Key Disney comics. One-page features fill out the issue, including a review of Marvel's **DEATHLOK**, a cartoon strip, and letters.

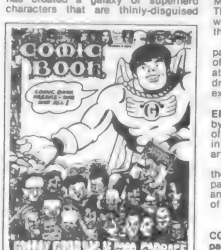
CANAR is well worth its low price and, for students of comic art, well worth the price of a subscription. **—R.H.**



COMIC BOOK #6; $1.00; 32 pages; Alan Hanley, editor; order from Alan Hanley / 6228 N. Winthrop Ave. / Chicago, IL 60660; stripzine.

Alan Hanley has long put on the most likeable one man show in fandom. In his **COMIC BOOK** and other fanzines he has written and drawn strips that are

Invariably a pleasure to read—unpretentious, light-hearted, funny. He began doing strips with the idea of resurrecting the unspoiled spirit of the early superhero comics, delighting nostalgia freaks before nostalgia became a fad. He has created a galaxy of superhero characters that are thinly-disguised



versions of old favorites like Captain Marvel (Goodguy), Captain America (All American Jack), Captain Midnight (Captain Thunder), the Spirit (Soul). These Hanley standbys are on view in this issue, along with The Mitey Buggers, a funny animal supergroup, and Dick Drake, a square-jawed cop in the Dick Tracy mold.

There's a different character to his work in this issue, though. In an introduction, he discusses the recent co-opting of the nostalgia idea by the commercial comics companies, and his consequent decision to steer away from pure nostalgia and to add a tinge of topicality to his strips. He seems a bit uncomfortable with this new approach, and there is a tentative air to the integration of such material into the stories. But there is no heavy-handed "relevance," and the wry Hanley humor and delightful character style continue to sparkle. Some of it is uproariously funny—an EC-style back cover and a Buster Brown-as-Marvel-hero gag, for instance.

COMIC BOOK is the ideal fanzine. It's not done to impress anyone, but for the fun of doing comic strips and for the pleasure that they give the reader. Hanley hints that this may be the last issue; let's hope not!

—A.S.

COMIC CRUSADER #15; 75c; 36 pages; Martin Greim, editor; four-color front cover; order from Martin Greim / Box 132 / Dedham, MA 02026; general comic fanzine.

Marty Greim usually produces a nice fanzine and this is one of his better issues, especially if you're a fan of **"SHAZAM!"** Captain Marvel. Most of the issue is devoted to the history of the Big Red Cheese and his creators and it is liberally sprinkled with professional and competent amateur renditions of Marvel and his family.

The front cover is a nice color piece by Kurt Schaffenberger depicting Marvel and Sivana battling in the sky. Inside, Don Newton, Dave Gibbons, Martin Greim, Dave Cockrum, C.C. Beck, Bill Black and Kurt Schaffenberger all do their bit to bring back various members of the Marvel family.

In keeping with the "Marvel Family" theme, there are several articles and interviews in **COMIC CRUSADER #15.** Don Newton and John Clark start things off with "Come on Sivana, Time To Resume Our 13 Year Nap," being a history of the confrontations between the good Captain and the evil Doctor. It takes ten pages to recap them all.

Then there's "Journey To The Rock Of Eternity" by Bob Cosgrove in which he interviews Otto and Jack Binder, the brothers who wrote and illustrated a goodly portion of the Marvel saga. Several photographs and model sheets accompany the interview which touches on everything from the early days of Captain Marvel to the creation of Fatman, the Human Flying Saucer.

Martin Greim chronicles the story of Captain Nazi, "Captain With A Curse." Then he interviews Kurt Schaffenberger who has drawn everything from the Marvel Family to the Superman Family. The Interview is four pages long and wraps up the Captain Marvel portion of the magazine.

"Ditko's H Series" follows with eight pages of his personal bugaboos passed off as a comic strip. We must admit that at least this strip displays some of the drawing ability and style that we used to expect from Steve Ditko.

The final feature in **COMIC CRUSADER #15** is "Tale Of An Ancient Mariner" by Martin Greim. It is a history/eulogy of/for Bill Everett. It details his creations in the comic field and his career as an artist. It's a fitting tribute to a fine artist.

Letters and a Syd Shores back cover of the Hulk and the Inhumans tie up the package. Marvel Family freaks will love it and almost everyone can find something of interest here. A treat at 75c.

—J.V.

COMIC MEDIA #11; 75c ($3.00 for 4); 40 pages; quarterly; Nick Landau, editor; two-color covers; order from, in USA, Charles Swift / 4718 N. 9th St. / Philadelphia, Pa. 19141; in Canada, Mike Niederman / 1 Wembley Place / London, Ontario / Canada; British fanzine.

COMIC MEDIA is probably the finest imported British fanzine extant today. There's nothing of the sycophantic, gosh-wow, fawning approach to comics and their creators here. Instead, we find a deliciously forthright and intelligent journal encompassing quality work from British, American and European theaters.

The highlight of this issue is an extensive and penetrating interview with Sydney Jordan, artist and sometimes-writer of the "Jeff Hawke" newspaper strip. Aside from being an interesting personality, Jordan's twenty-some years as a strip artist have given him a wealth of insights and anecdotes about the industry which he recalls with an impressive memory for detail. Sprinkled

through the interview are numerous "Jeff Hawke" samples and a page of "The Invaders."

In his editorial, Landau contends that the English adventure strips hold a superior position to ours. We need only look at our daily papers and note the predominance of cartoon and soap opera strips to humbly agree. Foreign strips demonstrate a much higher degree of sophistication in plotting, characterization and the acceptance of nudity. In short, they have strips that admit there's such a thing as a mature audience for comics. To drive the point home, **COMIC MEDIA** reprints 15 sequential daily strips of "The Seekers" by Burns and Douglas and 31 straight episodes of O'Donnell and Holdaway's "Modesty Blaise." But to give us Yanks some credit there is a seven-page "Spirit" Sunday comics reprint from 1949.

Other **COMIC MEDIA** features include a review of five comic anthologies from America, England, Europe and one from The People's Republic of China plus a spotlight on Diabolik, the controversial anti-hero by Italian artist Gianni Bono.

One might expect such a top drawer magazine as this to suffer a bit from Stereotype British stuffiness. Keep a stiff upper, **COMIC MEDIA** is friendly and unassuming and manages to be so without sacrificing the sagacious and sober treatment of the material. All in all, a very good way to spend six bits. **—BN**

COMIX WORLD #14; subscriptions only, $1.25 for 6 or $2.50 for 12; two pages total; monthly; Clay Geerdes, editor; order from Clay Geerdes / 815 Indian Rock Rd. / Berkeley, CA 94704; underground comix newsletter.

Clay Geerdes is probably the top cheerleader for the underground comix movement: he's got **COMIX WORLD** franked through several underground newspapers, major fan newszines and if you miss it there he sells it direct. Certainly the idea behind this modest newsletter is to strengthen the popular support base of the undergrounds and what with the recent Supreme Court rulings it's comforting to know there are underground comics to support.

Geerdes' base of information is the San Francisco Bay Area, heartland of the comix, and his main sources and icons sprout from there, but this issue extends all the way to Holland to tout Dutch cartoonist Evert Geradts.

Geradts has had work in several Krupp titles and appears regularly in a comic in his native land. He wrote a short but comprehensive autobiography for **CW** which Geerdes supplements with an introduction to Geradts and some art samples. The rest of the issue is news releases all jammed into available space.

For timely and thorough coverage of the comix domain, **COMIX WORLD** stands alone as a source of such specialized information. Anyone whose interests lean that way should try to catch at least one of its many appearances. **—B.N.**

DATELINE: COMICDOM #32; 20c or 3 for 50c; 12 pages total; ditto; approx. monthly; correspondence only; mailed folded without envelope; Mike Raub, editor; order from Mike Raub / 236 W. Homer St. / Freeport, IL 61032; fan newsletter.

The newsletter is a good idea. As a modest but informative comic fan chatter newsletter. It contains short items on new fanzines, comics apas, fanzine reviews and mostly letters from fans talking up their fanzines and projects. Assorted spot illos are scattered throughout. There is practically no discussion of pro comics; the emphasis is on fans and fanzines (particularly the non-slick, non-profit variety). Fanzine editors and contributors will probably find **D:C** a fun spot to get together with their comrades and shoot the breeze. Fans have long talked about the need for a fan (rather than comics) newszine. Right now, the coverage seems limited to the editor's inner circle of friends, but this zine has the potential to expand to a wider coverage of fandom as more people get into the act. **—A.S.**

GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE #16; $1.50; 48 pages; full-color covers; Bill Spicer, editor; order from Bill Spicer / 328 North Ave. 66 / Los Angeles, CA 90042; comic fanzine.

"In-depth" interviews have become a staple item with many fanzines...these days, but too often those interviews are shallow, poorly organized, uninformative—one more waltz around the tape recorder with Adams or Wrightson or whoever fandom's current hero is. Bill Spicer started the interview trend some years ago, and he continues to show everyone how it ought to be done.

Twenty-two pages of this issue of **G.S.M.** are devoted to an interview with Howard Nostrand. Who? Howard Nostrand hardly qualifies as a Big Name Artist—he is one of the talented, largely unrecognized journeymen artists who worked during the late 40s and early 50s—the "Dark Ages" of the comic book business, a period unaccountably neglected by comics historians. He worked as an assistant to the prolific Bob Powell, drew the Bat Masterson newspaper strip, and did most of his comic book work in Harvey's weird story and MAD imitation titles. His work was usually unsigned, and until his name came to light most 50s fans knew him only as "that guy who draws like Jack Davis." Nostrand has been in commercial art for some years now, so he has plenty of tales to tell of his sojourn as a comic artist. Nostrand is obviously a great talker—by turn opinionated, voluble, gossipy, informative. He provides a vivid picture of the business in those days (including some much-needed info on the 3-D boom and bust) and of the fascinating personalities, great artists and steal-you-blind publishers who worked in it. Interviewer Bhob Stewart does a fine job, but Nostrand is the star.

The interview is lavishly illustrated with art and photos. Three complete

comic stories are included: Bob Powell's "Colorama," Nostrand's "Ivan's Woe" (a "visual parody" of Wally Wood's "Trial by Arms") and "What's Happening at 8:30 P.M.," a delightful Eisnerish fantasy and a remarkable piece of work.

The Nostrand piece is reason enough to buy the magazine, but there's much more. There's "The Wishing World," a clever, hilarious, nicely-drawn "EC Madness" romp by Mark Evanier and John Pound (seven pages). Basil Wolverton fans will get their kicks from his "Berserk Burk the Hotel Clerk" (six pages). George Metzger, a **G.S.M.** discovery, concludes the issue with one of his always fascinating wordless science fiction strips, "Routine" (ten pages). Covers are by Nostrand and Metzger, and to top it off there's the best letter column going—starring a flying saucer nut and the usual letter from Hames Ware, always a goldmine of information on obscure comic artists.

The layout and printing are solid pro throughout and the price is better than reasonable. The only thing wrong with **GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE** is that it doesn't come out often enough. Don't pass this one up!

—A.S.

HOT STUF' #1; $2.50; 56 pages; full color covers; Sal Quartuccio, editor; order from Sal Quartuccio / 770 E. 45th St. / Brooklyn, N.Y. 11203.

HOT STUF' starts with a gorgeous fantasy painting by Ken Barr. Unfortunately, the rest of this very slick fanzine doesn't come up to the standard set by the front cover. Two strips by Richard Corben flank the material in the middle; "Bugs" and "Flyer" are both grody-provoking snap-ending science fiction stories, and the art is only fair for Corben, though devotees of his cantaloupe-boobed females will get a jollies. Fifteen pages in the middle are taken up by "Mice In Veloce," a murky New Wave science fiction short story by Bill Maher, with illustrations. Elsewhere we find "Shadow of the sword," a rather overblown barbarian fantasy strip by Rich Buckler based on Coleridge's "Xanadu." The art has some nice moments. Eleven pages are allotted to "Uncle Sal and Cousin Joh Go Planet-Tripping," a comedy strip by Robert Keenan (script), George

Perez and Bob Garrison (art)—quite funny in spots, but suffering from a lot of in-jokery involving the editor and his pals that will go right past you. Ernie Colon contributes a short maiden-and-dragon gag strip that will elicit a few chuckles. The color back cover by Corben wraps things up with a whimper; it's one of the poorest Corben pieces I've ever seen.

HOT STUF has quality printing and layout on slick paper; at $2.50 it's a better value than many slickzines in its class, but the stuf inside is not so hot. Quarlucci o has some work lined up for future issues, and perhaps those issues will be more praiseworthy than this one. Sure is a nice cover, though.

—A.S.

INFLUENCE #1; 30c; Xerox; 8 pages total; side stapled; Lan Katz, editor; order from Len Katz / 55-30 98 Place / Corona, NY 11368; comic fanzine.

Last issue, you'll remember, this beleagured reviewer was wrestling with the problem of reviewing an earnest but thoroughly terrible little fanzine put out by a couple of obvious fledgling fans. The problem is that one doesn't want to discourage a young, would-be fan publisher by a flat put-down (even if warranted by the quality of the zine), and in a large, competitive market we can't praise a zine just for its good intentions.

As you've surely guessed, that little speech is prefatory to my having to put the knock to another first-time fanzine. **INFLUENCE** features a short column defending "fannish" fanzines in a slickzine (that's fine with me), a silly short story and a four-page superhero strip, "Sound Barrier," which suffers from a poor story, poor art, poor lettering and crooked Letraset. Honest, we don't have it in for unsuccessful little fanzines like this one; as ever, our harshest judgments will be reserved for over-promoted, overpriced slickzines that promise more than they deliver. Katz

and friends have produced a loser their first time out, but that's hardly unique; keep trying, guys.

—A.S.

MEDIASCENE #9 and 10; 75c and $1.50 (or subscribe at six issues for $4.00); 24 and 36 pages total, respectively; 11"x17" tabloid format; bi-monthly; Jim Steranko, editor; two-color cover and two two-color interior pages; Order from Supergraphics / PO Box 445 / Wyomissing, PA 19610; multi-media news magazine.

MEDIASCENE attempts to cover more than just comic book news. Each issue has departments devoted to happenings in comics, TV, movies, paperbacks and the black-and-white magazine field. News is generally new when the issue arrives and all of the various media are well represented visually (lots of photographs and cover reproductions). Each issue is fairly thematic and the coverage is generally slanted towards the motif of the current issue. In issue number nine, for instance, the theme is "Heroes" and the movie and paperback news is related to heroes in those media: Sinbad and The Three Musketeers on film and The Phantom and the Executioner in books. A scoop on the Doc Savage film and an interview with Zardoz director John Boorman are also featured in issue nine.

MEDIASCENE #10 is a special double issue (double price, 50 per cent more pages) devoted to science-fiction. Media news is slightly slanted towards s-f with articles on Flash Gordon in film and comics, EC science-fiction comics, science-fiction on TV and old science-fiction pulps—carrying the theme throughout the issue. Harlan Ellison reviews "The Terminal Man" and Al Williamson presents a two page science-fiction strip called "Robbie."

Graphics occupy an important part of Supergraphics. All of the articles are heavily illustrated with photographs and cover reproductions, often to the detriment of the amount of text presented. It makes them look flashy and impressive, but I often little flesh on the bones of the articles. The news is improving, with more comment and a little more depth being shown in the comic section. The other media, however, still are getting little more than press release coverage. **MEDIASCENE** is an excellent concept that has yet to realize its full potential. But each issue demonstrates that Steranko is still striving towards that potential and we can expect better things in the future.

—J.V.

1974 NEW YORK COMIC ART CONVENTION PROGRAM BOOK: $3.50; 86 pages; 8½ x 11; b/w; square-back binding; Phil Seuling, editor; full-color covers plus 14 interior two-color pages; order from Phil Seuling / Box 1077, Cooper Island Station / Brooklyn, NY 11224; comic convention program book.

Program booklets are usually filled with ads and sketches and given away at the door to the convention. Putting one on the market for $3.50 might seem a bit presumptuous, but Phil Seuling makes sure that you get some value for your money.

Granted, there are ads. 36 pages of them, ranging from Atlas, Marvel, Red Circle, DC and Warren companies to fanzine and comic book dealers. All of the two-color pages are ads, as is the full-color back cover: portraits of the Warren characters. Eleven pages are devoted to the convention itself: events, members, staff, contents, and even two pages for autographs. The ads and the convention material only account for one half of this book. It's the other half that attempts to make this more than a program book.

The cover is a Joe Simon character-design for Captain America, in full color. There are also art pages by John Severin, Mike Kaluta and a one page strip by Bojak. The articles include two pages on "The Package Stores" of Chesler, Iger and Eisner; a transcript of the 1973 Convention luncheon featuring Phil Seuling, CC Beck, Bob Kane, Sol Harrison and Russ Heath with many photographs of the panelists; a five page illustrated feature on Frank Robbins; several pages of photographs from the 1973 convention; "An Appreciation of Roy Thomas" by Don and Maggie Thompson with photo and art by Wood, Smith and others; an article on Will Eisner by Murphy Anderson, a three page article on the preparation of LITTLE ANNIE FANNY with a photograph of Kurtzman and Elder and some Kurtzman pencilled pages of ANNIE, a two page Derek Carter convention drawing and a five page article on Joe Simon.

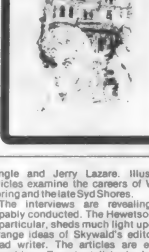
That may look like a lot of material, but most of it doesn't go into much depth on the topics covered. **THE 1974 NEW YORK COMIC ART CONVENTION PROGRAM BOOK** is one hell of a program book, but for $3.50, it's a woefully skimpy fanzine.

—J.V.

NOW AND THEN TIMES #2; $1; 46 pages; Dave Sim, editor; order from: Now and Then Times / 103 Queen St. S. / Kitchener, Ontario / Canada; fact and opinion fanzine.

A growing trend in fan publishing is the fanzine devoted to serious treatment of comic art and creators. A typical magazine of this sort relies heavily on interviews and critical discussions. Articles are liberally illustrated and great effort is expended on professional layout.

NOW AND THEN TIMES is one of the better examples of the genre. Four lengthy interviews constitute the bulk of the magazine: writers Alan Hewetson and T. Casey Brennan, and Canadian comics ex-illustrators Adrian and Pat



Dingle and Jerry Lazare. Illustrated articles examine the careers of Wayne Boring and the late Syd Shores.

The interviews are revealing and capably conducted. The Hewetson talk, in particular, sheds much light upon the strange ideas of Skywald's editor and head writer. The articles are equally absorbing. Two tantalizingly half-explained "Behind the DC Scenes" cartoons in the Wayne Boring feature will probably provoke some discussion.

For those fans whose interests lean toward dissecting the comic medium, **NOW AND THEN TIMES** would be a worthwhile purchase.

—R.H.

OMNIWAVE #10; 30c (8 for $2); 12 pages total; bi-monthly; Nathan Rosen, editor; order from Comma, 10822 Hob Nail Court / Potomac, MD 20854; general interest fanzine.

OMNIWAVE is mailed without envelope and it's quite possible that it might arrive, as **GEORGE**'s copy did, with a portion of the John Buscema back cover overprinted with a bold postal cancellation. The drawing itself is of a large, bearded barbarian and is easily the best piece of art in the magazine, despite the fact that it is little more than a finished sketch. The other artistic efforts are pretty amateurish and include: a front cover superhe oine by editor Rosen, a Dr. Doom portrait by Bob Hartka, a sketch by Dave Wiltz, two full page drawings by Ed Lancaster, a gag page by Rosen and another sketch by Wilt. None are outstanding.

The text portions lean heavily towards fantasy books and include reviews and news of some upcoming publications by several fantasy publishing houses. There's a short "history" of Arkham House which amounts to a listing of six books and their contents. A self-indulgent column by Bob Hartka follows which adds little but length to the magazine. A final half of a two part short story is next. I don't know about the first half, but this segment was found very wanting in both style and plot. "An Introduction to Edgar Rice Burroughs—Part 2" occupies another of the page, but they promise to finish it up next issue. An editorial and another column by Bob Harta finish off the zine. And none too soon.

Not that **OMNIWAVE** is a bad fanzine. It's just that it's not a good one. The layout and printing are uniformly poor and the art and articles seem from two or three different magazines, and none of them were any good either. Their lack of depth being of the most noticeable factor. I came away with a very empty feeling.

—J.B.

ORB #'s 1 and 2; 75c and $1.00, respectively; 56 and 72 pages, respectively; #2 is comic-sized; quarterly; James Waley, editor; full-color covers on #1, full-color cover on #2, eight pages of interior color in #2; order from Orb Publications / 660½ Bloor St. W. #1 / Toronto, Ontario / Canada M6G 1K9; comic magazine format.

This is a tough one. We can't decide if ORB's a fanzine, an upcoming professional magazine or sitting in limbo between the two. The treatment of the material from a production standpoint and the entire packaging concept of the magazine all suggest that a level of professionalism is being strived for; at least enough to win it a spot on the newsstands. However, the material itself is almost blanketly below pro calibre. Oh, it's good in spots and some things shine brightly but there seems to be an "I'll take what I can get" look to it rather than "I'll take what's best." There's also a question of editorial intent. What sort of work is **ORB** seeking to publish? Some of the strips have a quasi-underground appeal, others Science Fiction, a touch of Sword and Sorcery and various other aspects of fantasy or horror. Conceptually, it's very unattached. And it's these aspects which suggest **ORB** is, if not a fanzine, at least a **non-professional magazine**, which is how we shall deal with it. Indeed, why we are reviewing it at all.

There are six strips in the first issue. Of these only John Allison's "Devil's Triangle" and Paul McCusker's "Belial" go anywhere. "The Winds of Numb-A" by Matt Rust is a heavy-handed parody that opens quietly enough but grows progressively more jumbled and esoteric, reminding us of someone dropping acid before a speech. "The Trip" is a standard alien-from-another-dimension bit that might have been happier in an underground comic and editor Waley's "Kadaver" marks the low spot of the issue; crude, overwritten and too dependent on layout gimmicks that don't work. The cover is a fairly attractive piece by Allison of a mildly surreal panorama. The coloring has a few minor flaws but not enough to diminish the pleasant airbrush effects.

ORB #2 has more pages, a small price hike, more color and a new size. The cover this time is a painting (#1's was color applied over line work) by Richard Robertson. The contents are more

cohesive and the general quality of the work is higher throughout. Gene Day's opening strip lacks only a lighter inking hand to fully succeed but Day's hand inks in the second strip are more depreciating to the pencils of Paul Savard. Both strips are middling "space opera" themes. Ronn Sutton's short but very sweet entry may be the best visual treat in the book but it should have been given a different place in the line up. Coming from Day's heavy inks to Sutton's delicate line work is too rapid a shift in intensities.

Matt Rust returns this issue with "The Seeker," an interesting attempt to render a philosophical story that falters only because there's a notable lack of conflict. Artwise Rust is much improved and could be a name to remember once his figures loosen up.

The color strip introduces what hopes to be a continuing character, The Guardian of Mars. John Allison deftly handles the art chores from a script from

out-of-the-woodworker f.Casey Brennan.

McCusker is also a holdover from the first issue who offers a tale of horror set in the trenches of World War I. It has its moment but is nothing to crow about. And speaking of not crowing, Waley's "Kadaver" continues to evade his deserved eternal rest, this time with inks by Matt Rust. Unfortunately, Rust isn't able to overcome the script, breakdowns or pencils. We guess that as editor Waley can indulge himself in this albatross but there's been nothing in it yet to inspire any more hope than one might wish it a quick bye-bye blackbird.

The rest of the magazine is much better. Bruces Bezaire's tale of a demented horror show actor who takes it upon himself to make some very personal appearances once his career goes on the rocks is clever, well-paced and nicely drawn. Greg Landry's Viet Nam vignette is blessed with graceful art and Bob McIntyre contributes an exquisite back cover. And thus ends a very fat magazine.

It must be said of **ORB** that it's quite a lot of magazine for the money and the material is on a par with most of the better fan work in most cases. If a more jaundiced appraisal is enforced it stems from **ORB**'s lofty aspirations, which almost demand it be viewed against a magazine of professional enterprise. Yet the final judgment must rest with the readers and **ORB** has enough going for it to merit the recommendation that you look over a copy and see if it matches your tastes.

One more point bears mentioning. Because of **ORB**'s status it stands as an excellent place for talented amateurs who may be ready to make the big move to try their luck before assaulting the pro outfits. For this reason, perhaps above all others, it should be hoped that **ORB** maintains its existence. —**B.N.**

RAGNAROK #3; 75c; 44 pages + poster; 8½" by 5½" (poster 17" by 17"); Mark Collins and Eli Friedman, editors; color covers; order from Fandom Enterprises / 4654 Orange Road / Orange, NJ 07050; general interest fanzine.

RAGNAROK #3 sports a cover by Barry Smith and Vaughn Bode and, if you have read the indicia above, you're probably already reaching for your wallet thinking, "Wow, color covers by Smith and Bode!" Well, we neither want to discourage you from buying **RAGNAROK**, nor belittle the efforts of its creators, but the color covers aren't why you'll want it. Reason is simply that the color is flat and fairly uninteresting, being done with simple overlays and used more to flesh out the drawings than to sell the fanzine. It's nice to see some color in a fanzine, and it's done competently here, but don't conjure up too many exciting visions or you'll be disappointed.

But that's about the only thing about the fanzine that could disappoint you. The covers are merely a foretoken of interior interviews with both Smith and Bode. Both make for intriguing reading and manage to be mildly informative in the process. Not bad reading. The Bode interview is sprinkled with art and photographs of Vaughn, while Smith's contains some small pieces of his art along with several illustrations by other artists.

The only other text features are a one-page review of the first Red Circle mystery comic book and a slightly zany look behind the scenes at the 1973 New York Comic Art Convention. While the first piece could have been much better, the second was well presented and gave a new perspective to convention activities.

Now for the rest of **RAGNAROK**; the art and photographs. Two major photo pieces are presented this issue and they both deal with Convention Costume Contests. The first is a recap of the 1973 New York Comic Con event with photos of the winners and eight or nine other contestants. There is a running commentary on the event provided by Tom Fagan giving details of the costumes and the skits some of the contestants performed. The second event recorded was the '73 World Science Fiction Convention costume caper.

The photographs aren't nearly as clear as the first but they do manage to demonstrate that science fiction fans are head and shoulders (and perhaps a little more) above their comic-ey cousins when it comes to these events.

Two Jack Davis drawings depicting the old "Andy Griffith Show" characters and a very beautiful poster by Davis entitled "Some Georgia Millitia Men" are also included. The centerpiece is a fairly nice drawing by Bill Graham. The inside covers carry a two page strip by Matt Howarth. Other artists in the magazine include: Alan Hanley, Eric Harrison, Ken Landgraf, Rick Williams and Jay Messena. A Kung Fu collage and a few pages of ads finish it off.

A good fanzine at a good price. —**J.V.**

SPACE AND TIME PRESENTS: DARK OVER; 45c; eight pages; Gordon Linzer, editor; side stapled; order from Gordon Linzer / 83-10 118th St. / Apt. K-M / Kew Gardens, NY 11415; stripzine.

The reasons behind **DARK OVER** appear twofold: one, to showcase the talents of artist Gary Winnick; and, two, to whet our appetites enough to subscribe to Linzer's major publication **SPACE AND TIME**, in which **DARK OVER** is scheduled to continue.

Well, Winnick's art is good but not quite up to this sort of star treatment. And it seems a bit much to ask a fan to shell out a fast 45c for a zine that bows out with "to be continued."

The strip itself is a loose synthesis of the elements of Conan and Flash Gordon and features Suldan, a hybrid born of a Milliean father and Earth mother. As you'd expect, not much happens in the short space allotted the adventure; the characters are introduced, a robot tank attacks their deserted rocket-cum-castle and Suldan dispatches it the moment it gets off a shot. Cut to cliffhanger and exit.

Frankly, **DARK OVER** is guilty of little more than an unsound marketing procedure. For what it is and what it's trying to do it should cost a lot less. Linzer can take a look at the local supermarket for a right way to display customer-getting "loss leader" techniques. It might save him from storing a closetful of unsold copies. —**B.N.**

SOUTH OF THE MOON #1; cost is one Self-Addressed, Stamped Envelope (subscriptions are 3 issues for $1.25); six pages total; quarterly; Richard Small, editor; send your SASE to him at 117 S. Meridian St. #3 / Tallahassee, FL 32301; APA Index.

APA stands for Amateur Press Association or Alliance, take your pick. The basic concept can be traced to 1878 and consists of a group of people publishing a periodic magazine to which they all contribute in order to gain and sustain membership in the APA. Usually there are a minimum number of pages that each member must produce over a certain period of time (six pages every three months, for example). The reproduction is generally done by the individual (ditto and mimeo mostly) and the number of copies produced is limited to the number of members in the APA, plus a few extra for people who might join later and desire to see what has gone before. All of the material is mailed to one member who is in charge of putting all the small magazines into one big one which is then mailed out to all of the members. It's an ideal forum for communication, experimentation and just plain fun.

SOUTH OF THE MOON is an index of most of the APAs that exist today. Rich Small has assembled information on about 40 different APAs, telling you whom to contact if you wish to join, how many pages of material you will be required to produce, which members offer printing facilities for members without their own equipment and the history and theme of each.

You see, APAs generally attract like-minded people and are either conceived with a specific hobby or subject in mind or they gradually develope a membership which has certain preferences. Several of those listed in **SOUTH OF THE MOON** are specifically for Comic Fans, others cater to Western Fans, Fantasy Fans, Cinema Fans, ad infinitum. And while the listings cover almost every geographical location, you don't have to pick one that's close by. As long as you can get to a mail box, you can join any of them. Membership in the APAs listed ranges from 10 to 50 people, and the number of copies required from 20 to 70.

SOUTH OF THE MOON will provide anyone who is interested in APAs with much valuable information. —**J.V.**

TARA ON THE DARK CONTINENT; $1.00 (plus 25c postage); 40 pages; Bill Black, editor; order from Paragon Publications / 1515 Bowman Dr. / Tallahassee, FL 32303; comic book format.

The background scoop on Tara: her fabulously wealthy father has used some of his scratch to build an island wildlife preserve. Tara is the chief caretaker there and zips about the wild terrain in abbreviated togs preventing various evildoers from wrecking the animals' sanctity (not to mention daddy's bustling tourist trade).

And so she goes, raven-haired and racy; crammed into bikini briefs, pendulous pectorals scooped into skimpy halter, trusty machete blade at her side, swinging through the trees like Tarzan after a Swedish operation. In her adventures she fights cheap hoods, aliens from space, a voodoo priestess and a giant Freudian snake. And while she's recovering from that another of Black's babes, Stormy Tempest, wiggles in for a jocose two-pager against the Space Hag. The finale features Astron, a male hero in a hurried introductory strip.

Black's a good strip artist (no pun); he has a sense of drama, keeps the action running at a fever pitch and he draws well. Yet there's something disturbing about Black's constantly sexual compositions.

Practically every panel is an exercise in exploiting the female form and as you look at the pages a lot of tits and ass look back. It almost has the uncomfortable feeling of watching someone engage in a private fantasy or learning a secret you didn't want to know. Granted, the stories are intended to be slightly titillating, but they grope where they should caress. Fortunately, **TARA** is good enough in other respects to overcome this annoyance. —**B.N.**

THE BUYER'S GUIDE #66; sample copy 50c ($3.00 for 24 issues); is 16 pages; tabloid newspaper format; mailed folded without envelope; Alan Light, editor; order from Dynapubs / RR#1, Box 297 / East Moline, IL 61244; published twice a month; advertising fanzine.

What can you say about an adzine that bills itself as "The **Bible** of Comics Fandom" and makes claims of "reaching all serious comic collectors?" Well, you can say that's a crock; that **TBG** is no more the **Bible** than **Fanny Hill**, that there are plenty of fans who don't subscribe, and that Alan Light suffers from a case of **hubris**. Quite a few fans are put off by Light's pose as fandom's guiding light and savior. He's simply a good businessman (or if not a simple, in fact) who puts out a good, useful product that's quite capable of selling itself, and doesn't need the heavy doses of gratuitous press agentry and self-aggrandizing flack regularly dispensed by the editor and his chief toady, Murray Bishoff.

After all, **TBG** is comic fandom's biggest adzine. It has a circulation of 6500, comes out on schedule, and is reasonably priced. Sellers of comic books, strips, fanzines and the like have undoubtedly found it an excellent place to hawk their wares. Fans in the market for such things will find it an ideal place to hunt up the items they're looking for. There is the added bonus of features and columns in the odd-numbered issues; the most notable being Don and Maggie Thompson's "Beautiful Balloons," a potpourri of comics news and comment that's also well worth reading.

TBG has become an important fixture in comics fandom, and deservedly so; if Alan Light would just cut the crap it would be a lot easier to take. —**A.S.**

THE CHARLTON PORTFOLIO (Actually CPL #9-10); $2.50; 44 pages; Robert Layton, editor; order from: CPL / Gang Publications / 4010 Mallway Drive / Apartment A / Indianapolis, IN 46236; Charlton fanzine.

The gang who put out **CPL** Magazine had their hearts in the right place when they devoted this double issue to CHARLTON PORTFOLIO, but their book isn't all it could be.

The editor's intent in publishing the **PORTFOLIO** is to call attention to that much-ignored underdog of the industry, Charlton Comics. The art and articles concentrate almost exclusively on Charlton's brief but legendary flirtation with superheroes under Dick Giordano's editorship in the late 60s.

Opening the issue is an unpublished 18-page BLUE BEETLE story which would have been issue six of the BB comic. Penciled, drawn by Ditko and written by D.C. Glanzman (probably Ditko), was worth printing. It exemplifies all that was good and bad about Charlton's most famous superhero creator. The art is dynamic (with beautiful action) but indifferently inked; the story is solidly-plotted but preachy (fortunately not as preachy as Ditko's later Mr. A strips).

The remainder of the **PORTFOLIO** is divided almost 50/50 between art and text. It's the latter department which drags the zine down. The articles recount the origins and adventurers of Charlton's heroes. They are brief and shallow. Most are overexcited paens of praise for the series under discussion, with little real substance. The only really worthwhile text feature is Don Rosa's checklist of Charlton super-character comics, which would be useful for the beginning Charlton collector.

Portfolio art consists of full-page pin-ups of Charlton characters. Most are nice pieces by Charlton pros: Dick Giordano, Pete "PAM" Morisi, Jim Aparo, Joe Staton, Pat Boyette. The fan drawings are ok, too, despite the efforts of inker Duffy Vohland.

The main fault of the **CHARLTON**

PORTFOLIO is that you're paying two and a half bucks for the Ditko strip and a couple pieces of art. The price tag would be still to begin with, but even more so when half the magazine is throwaway. But for Charlton fans, it's all there is. We suppose things could have been worse.
—R.H.

THE COMIC READER #110; 45c ($2 for 5 issues, $4 for 10 issues); 20 pages; 5½"x8½"; monthly; mailed flat, first class, sans envelope; Mike Tiefenbacher, editor, from Street Enterprises / PO Box 256 / Menomonee Falls, WI 53051; newszine.

TCR continues to roll along with readable and comprehensive news flashes about what's happening in the comic media. They offer news and gab about Marvel, National, Charlton, Warren, Red Circle, Gold Key, the upcoming Seaboard Company, the undergrounds via **COMIX WORLD** and miscellaneous tidbits from the comic publishing scene. It's well organized, clearly presented and appealingly interspersed with comic cover reproductions from the newest releases.

A couple of bonus items appear in the form of a pocket checklist of comic titles, a full-page cartoon by Alan Hanley and Ronald Wilson cover of Luke Cage.

This is easily the best regular source of information for fans interested in what's going on in the ever-changing world of professional comics.
—B.N.

THE COMIC WRITER #3; 25c ($1.00 for 5); 13 pages total; John D. Hemmings, editor; printed ditto; side stapled; mailed folded sans envelope; order from John D. Hemmings / 224 East Mill Rd. / Long Valley, NJ 07853; comics and science fiction fanzine.

Now that the plague of gratuitous slickness in fanzines is on the wane the smaller, simpler and more personal publications are taking a more active role in the fan press. These magazines provided the foundation for today's burgeoning fanzine scene and very often their success was determined by the editor's wit, creativity and ability to entertain. They were, in effect, an extension of the editor's personality in written form and their inherent worth was determined by how well he could project himself in print. On that score, **TCW** is quite good.

The material itself is pretty standard; Star Trek and comic reviews and a quick look at two old science fiction movies are mainly filler but can be met with enjoyment due to Hemming's writing. The meatier articles, the beginning of a series of articles on Superman and a listing of 125 horror / fantasy / SF movies, provide a better fare. Only a one-page story called "Gyroman vs. Force" is a total bomb.

The appeal of **TCW** is one of having a relaxing and easy conversation with someone who comes off as interesting and down-to-earth. This type of fanzine won't appeal to everyone, especially the reader who's looking for passive entertainment. **TCW** is for those who want to join in; reader reaction plays a large part in determining future issues where long letter columns are a planned key feature. If you want to get involved, **TCW** is as good a place to start as any.
—B.N.

THE HARVARD JOURNAL OF PICTORIAL FICTION #1; $2.00; 36 pages; Thomas A. Durwood, editor; order from Thomas A. Durwood / Box 21 Memorial Hall / Harvard University / Cambridge, MA 02138; comics analysis fanzine.

The occasional attempts by scholars, mostly popular culture specialists, to examine comics have usually been disasters. They invariably look at comics as if they were mass media objects rather than as creative works. They fail to understand the nature of the graphic story form and are ignorant of comics history and of the artists who work in the field. Thus the idea of a group of Harvard students, who are also comic fans, putting together a journal of semi-scholarly analytical pieces on comics seemed a promising one. They would have the training in rigorous scholarship and the special knowledge and understanding of the form that comic fans are privy to. A sensible analysis of comics was not to be, however, and this zine is a monumental flop.

Nearly all the writers herein seem to have graduated from film cultism to comics, and in several articles there is more talk about movies than comics. Also, they seem to have only a shallow knowledge of comics; there's much discussion of trendy things like the Fourth World series and Marvel relevance, those dimpled darlings of the campus, but nobody displays any broad knowledge of the field. There are many things to be learned by comparing comics and films, but in too many of these pieces the discussion of comics takes a back seat to the parading of the worst sort of **Cahiers du Cinema** pseudo-intellectual bullshit. The editor's lead article, "Jack Kirby, Fritz Lang and Balance" is typical. He draws some obvious parallels between Kirby's work and Lang's **Metropolis** while tossing around a lot of buzz words like Freud, anal fixation, Marxism, ethereal hedonism and the like. It's all very stodgy and highbrow, but he fails to use the Kirby / Lang parallel to reveal anything not patently obvious about either. It's a windy, empty exercise. As is a nonsensical discussion of the value of text in comics, requiring the purist view of silent films as applied to comics—also applied by "comics purists" known only to the author, apparently.

There is a reasonably well thought out discussion of "Comics' New Wave" by Michael Young and Richard Foltin, covering the work of Smith, Kaluta, Wrightson and Starlin with some panel-by-panel analyses. However, the authors show scant knowledge of earlier schools of art that have had major influence on that work.

Almost justifying the price of the magazine, though, is "Bypassing the Real for the Ideal," a fascinating discussion of comics by old pro Gil Kane. Kane has a lot of thought-provoking ideas about the nature of comic art and the forces that drive its creators; and, for a change, he expresses himself without jargon and fake-erudite posturing. However, the article is marred by an incredibly stupid gimmick inserted by the editor. Every few paragraphs he breaks in in italics to tell us what Kane has said and what he's going to say, as if we need Thomas A. Durwood to lead us through the wilderness of Kane's perfectly clear prose. It's ludicrous.

Though the whole package is definitely worth a look-see, the Harvard hot-shots have come up with a near total loss. A very good idea has been sacrificed on the altar of fatheaded quack-scholarly egotripping.
—A.S.

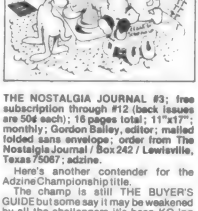
THE JOURNAL #12; 25d ($2.00 per year, add 25¢ when paying by check); 12 pages; 11"x17"; monthly (semi-monthly by the time you read this); Paul Kowtiuk, editor; order from The Journal / Box 1286 / Essex, Ontario / Canada; ad and newszine.

The hard-sell huckstersim common to many adzines is thankfully absent from THE JOURNAL. Better than half of this issue's contents are articles and columns in a format that supports their news and entertainment package without defeating the advertiser's impetus.

In addition to news, announcements and an editorial are Stan Blair's "NCB Hotline," Steve Barrington's "Comic Spot-Light" column, "The Other Page" by Jay Zilber, a fan forum, letters and a full-page cover by Bruce D. Patterson.

Of special note is Zilber's column: he reviews current comics. Traditionally, this sort of feature is a dreary regurgitation of plot, latest villain and de rigueur flatcuffs; but Zilber isn't taking the route. Instead, he actually makes perceptive and intelligent comments about the latest releases in an entertaining, breezy style. Good work.

As for its advertising base, TJ is now hitting 4200 fans, selling ad space at competitive rates and jacking its schedule up to publish every two weeks with the fifteenth issue. It deserves a serious look by any fan or advertiser.
—B.N.



THE NOSTALGIA JOURNAL #3; free subscription through #12 (back issues are 50¢ each); 16 pages total; 11"x17"; monthly; Gordon Bailey, editor; mailed folded sans envelope; order from The Nostalgia Journal / Box 242 / Lewisville, Texas 75067; adzine.

Here's another contender for the Adzine Championship title.

The champ is still THE BUYER'S GUIDE but some say it may be weakened by all the challengers it's been KO-ing lately. But TBG's ring-wise veteran slugger, Alan Light, is a tough defender of the crown and it remains to be seen if TNJ's Gordon Bailey can muster the Sunday punch needed to put Light on the canvas.

TBG has it over TNJ in bulk and reach, hitting 6500 subscribers to TNJ's 6000 and easily tripling TNJ's mittful of pages. But Bailey can slam a hard one-two under Light's defenses with its lower ad rates and free subscriptions.

They're both still dancing in the early rounds but Bailey is impressing 'em all the way back to the ringside seats with his fancy footwork and battle savvy. He should, they're the same tactics Light used to punch his way to the top—the mailing lists gathered at various conventions, from names gleaned in fan publications and fans submitting requests for freebies. Bailey also has an entourage with him of fans from many collecting bents: radio, films, premiums, comics, etc., due to these name gathering techniques.

The question remains: can Bailey deck Light? Right now the smart money's on the champ. Bailey's non-ad jabs include a handsome cartoony front cover, Roger Sikes' "I Remember Premiums" article and a letters section, which Light can match blow for blow with plenty of features to spare. But the odds aren't as wide as they've been in other contests. The spunky challenger has a good organization behind him, the ability to toss a mean haymaker and he's showing a lot of moxie at the front of the bout. Up till now Light's jaw hasn't stood still long enough for anyone to land a solid tag so we don't know if it's made of glass or not. Bailey ought to be the guy to watch to find this out. If he doesn't pull an upset, we can at least look for him to go the distance.
—B.N.

THE ROCKET'S BLAST COMICOLLECTOR #112; $1.25 (or 4 for $5.00, third class mail; consult magazine for other options); 88 pages; Gordon B. Love, editor; monthly; order from S.F.C.A. / 6076 SW 212 Street / Miami, FL 33187; general interest fanzine and adzine.

The RBCC can no longer be classified as merely an adzine. The last few years have seen volume of ads being gradually replaced with articles and continuing features devoted to all aspects of collecting. Issue #112 is a good example of how completely the transition has occured. Nine pages contain advertisements placed by the publishers of the RBCC and there are 20 pages of ads from other sources. The rest of the magazine, a full two-thirds, is crammed with features and articles about comics, films, conventions, etc.

The 1974 Houston Convention and the 1974 International Star Trek Convention are both reported upon, with many photos of proceedings and celebrities. The making of "2001" is covered by Jim Van Hise who also reviews NATIONAL COMICS #13 in his "Age of Quality" column. A nine page reprint of a Will Elsner "Uncle Sam" strip from that comic accompanies the column. There's an "Information Center" run by Don Rosa who will answer any questions you might have regarding comics, TV or serials. A news column called "Keyhole" appears every issue, as do "Critique" (a fanzine review column), "The Williamson Collector" (devoted to chronicling and reviewing his comic work), "Comic Collector's Comments" (a rambling column about comics) and a radio column entitled "A Twist Of The Dial." The last issue and this one also have contained columns on MLJ Comics by Raymond Miller and "Dell Comics are Good Comics," which is a well illustrated look at the Kelly Barks era of Dell comics. This issue also contains an interesting feature called "Golden Age Gleanings" in which Patrick O'Brien traces the circulation records of the comic book companies back to the years 1937 to 1944.

James Van Hise takes over the editorship next month after G.B. Love's 14 years at the helm. He might institute some changes that may cause us to change our opinion of the RBCC, but right now it's a better article fanzine than it is an adzine.
—J.V.

TRANSMUTATION #2; 25d; 28 pages; side-stapled; Bruce Litchfield, editor; order from Transmutation Publications / 493 Knollwood Road / White Plains, NY 10603; general interest fanzine.

This second issue of Bruce Litchfield's general interest magazine is average fanzine fare. Art content includes two articles with Fairand and numerous spot illustrations, both fan drawings and the inevitable pro souvenir sketches. Text includes a satirical interview with "Aziz Isimav," thoughtful fanzine and book reviews, letters, and a checklist of Barry Smith artwork.

The entire package isn't too bad, although the thick dark-green paper on which the magazine is printed makes reading rough going in spots. TRANSMUTATION's personality is friendly and casual, and fairly priced at twenty-five cents.
—R.H.

WAXWORKS #1; 60¢; 20 pages; Richard Larson—editor; Order from Richard Larson at 3834 21st Ave. So. / Minneapolis, MN 55407; amateur strip magazine.

WAXWORKS is filled, cover to cover, with artwork by Richard Larson, so part of any enjoyment of the magazine must depend on one's appreciation of his capabilities. He is not a great artist, not yet anyway. His style carries connotations of Joe Staton mixed with Steve Ditko, but is a not a mindless copy of either. His art lacks depth and occasionally delineation, yet manages to maintain a quality and value all its own. We said it wasn't great, but it is competent, and it is interesting.

Three stories and a cover drawing take up the entire book. Credits and other editorial information occupy only a portion of the margin of the first page. The stories are written by Mr. Larson,

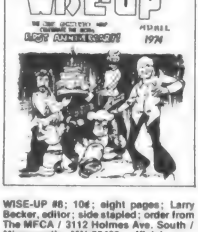
Tim Collier and Mark Carlson and display a depth of characterization one seldom finds in a fanzine. They are, by no means, 100 percent effective nor are they all that professional, but neither are they slavish imitations of professional comic stories. They deal with a haunted well in the midst of the Arabian desert, a killer's attempt to hide in a carnival, and some human slaves of an alien race. All three are handled well and create a mood within the story that makes them all work.

We liked WAXWORKS, and the 50¢ price tag makes it a bargain at today's inflated prices. We hope we see more from Larson & Co. —J.V.

WILL EISNER'S GALLERY OF NEW COMICS 1974 #1; 75¢; 32 pages; Will Eisner, editor; order from The School of Visual Arts / 209 E. 23rd St. / New York, NY; stripzine.

This is a motley collection of work done by School of Visual Arts students for a cartooning course taught by Will Eisner. This magazine qualifies as part of the current Eisner boomlet that has resulted from the reprinting of his Spirit. Eisner is a genius, of course, and the S.V.A. has quite a reputation as a training ground for comic artists. It can boast of many notable grads, including many of the EC stars. Judging by the material here, though, you'd have to conclude that most of Eisner's students were napping in class, or that they don't make budding comic artists like they used to. Most of the items are short, inconsequential pseudo-underground strips with flaky story ideas and mediocre artwork. "The Hermaphrodite" (unsigned, unfortunately), the longest piece at five pages, is the best of the undergroundish things. It's not great, but it is competently drawn and laid out, and it is the only item up to the level of the current comix market. The only real standout in the book is "The Passing of Odysseus Ferris," an evocative seven-page strip drawn in an interesting illustrational style by Kenneth Laager. His work deserves more space than the three pages given him here.

The package is fairly priced, and Laager's work is worth checking out, but the overall result is a disappointment. The cover by Eisner shows the Spirit looking at some comic artwork. Methinks he'd rather be out beating up crooks. —A.S.



WISE-UP #8; 10¢; eight pages; Larry Becker, editor; side stapled; order from The MFCA / 3112 Holmes Ave. South / Minneapolis, MN 55408; official organ of the MFCA and general interest fanzine.

The main purpose of WISE-UP is to provide a central base for fans of the Minneapolis area. They offer ad space, news and an open forum for the locals.

For outsiders there are a few items less esoteric. Charlie Swift asks "Why Not An Effective Comics Award System? He raises several valid arguments against the current systems but poses what is probably a too-limited and naive alternative. Rocco Rosen went to a convention and takes a page to bitch about it and later on Ken Fletcher takes a page to discuss the same affair. Seems it was a science fiction convention and wasn't concerned with the standard comic-con programming.

Two shorties close out the zine; a Bring Back Howard the Duck coupon and an article from the NATIONAL INQUIRER updating the status of Jerry "Beaver" Matthers.

WISE-UP is worth the dime if you like to engage in very casual fannish reading. Minneapolis residents especially should want to grab a copy. —B.N.

WORD BALLOONS #1; $1.25 (3 issue subscription for $3.00); published quarterly; Gary Groth, editor; order from Fantagraphics Publishing Co. / 7283 Evanston Rd. / Springfield, VA 22150; general comics fanzine.

A catchy moniker, a crisp layout, focused photos, a smattering of art, and a whole lot of words make up the first issue of a proposed quarterly fanzine devoted to the "comic arts." Editor Groth has been around fanzines quite a bit and his experience shows through on almost every page.

The front cover is a small drawing by Jeff Jones which is placed beautifully at the bottom of the page creating an open and well-balanced feeling. Balance. That's a key word and a valid description of the entire magazine. The major text pieces include a transcription of Archie Goodwin's keynote speech at Metro Con '73, an interview with Neal Adams conducted by Martin Pasko, a transcription of the "Writers Of The Comics" panel discussion held at Metro Con '71, a transcription of Denny O'Neil's keynote speech from Metro Con '72 and Steranko's speech at Metro Con '71. Each one of these contains one or more photographs of the speaker or speakers with the exception of the Adams interview which sports a page and a half of Neal's art; all of which temper and balance out the otherwise dominant text.

The main artistic thrust of the magazine comes in the way of a portfolio by Donald Wong. His artwork occupies six pages and has a heavy oriental flavor. It fits very nicely into the design of the book except for the hand lettering on the first page which is typical of most of the other very professional looking titles. A minor setback. The only other art is the inside back cover by Alan Hanley and the back cover drawing by Jeff Jones, both of which are three years old and look it.

Underground comix reviews, an editorial, a book review of a Denny O'Neil novel, and a letters page fill any remaining space. All are competent and display some thought on the part of the authors.

WORD BALLOONS works. The speeches, reviews, interview and discussions all make for interesting reading and the graphics allow your eyes an occasional respite. The art, while not outstanding, is well reproduced and

INFINITY 2? That was one of the magazines which started it all ... started the escalating trend of slick, overpriced magazines whose major attraction is a grab-bag of art by big-name professionals. And you know what? It's just as tacky now as it was then.

Of course, being one of the pioneer pro slickies, INFINITY 2 looks a bit ragged by today's standards. The paper stock is plain and the layout is amateurish. The editors improved on the appearance in later issues. But the basic character is there.

What do we get in INFINITY 2? The usual: Nice Wrightson drawing; a couple nice Brunner drawings; lots of scribbly stuff by Steranko, Krenkel, Fantucchio, and so on, all given more space than they deserve; a couple paintings by Brunner and Jones reproduced in black and white on the covers; two Virgil Finlay cover roughs—extremely rough—and (for this reprint only) a passable drawing each from Gray Morrow and Dan Adkins. Other than an outdated letter column, the only text features are ludicrously uninformative interviews with Wrightson and Frazetta which wander all over and never follow up a question.

Back in the days when INFINITY 2 first came out (at $2.50) it was a bit more outrageously priced than it is today. The price is down to two bucks, and inflation being what it is the bite isn't so painful. But it's still a bite. INFINITY 2 remains an overpriced, unattractive mishmash of mostly mediocre artwork selling on the basis of the names of the pros represented. The worst part is, the collector's curse, completism, will urge numerous fans to waste their money on this thing just to have this or that previously unpublished piece. Oh, well. Consider yourself warned. **—R.H.**

SPECIAL EDITION SERIES #2: THE RAY AND BLACK CONDOR; $14.95; 356 pages; Alan Light, editor; four-color covers and eight interior four-color pages; order from Special Edition Reprints / RR 1, Box 297 / East Moline, IL 61244; comic-reprint fanzine.

If you have never heard of Louis K. Fine, you don't know what you've been missing. He's probably one of the greatest artists ever to draw for comic books and has probably exerted an influence over every artist who saw his work. "The Ray" and "The Black Condor" were both strips which he drew back in the very early 1940s and this massive book reprints many of the episodes he embellished (along with a few stories that other artists, including Reed Crandall, drew).

Jim Steranko provides an introduction to the book detailing Fine's career. There is one story that is reprinted in color, as are the cover drawings. But that's where the fun stops.

So much of the art in this book is beautiful beyond words. The design, the rendering, the shading—it's all **almost** there to be beheld and marveled at. ALMOST! The reproduction method employed is just not capable of holding the vast majority of the details Fine put into his drawings. His shadows turn gray. Contrasts disappear into a murky sameness. Subtle shadings blur like a bad Xerox copy.

We can understand the problems with reproducing from the printed comic page. Colors blur the images and reds photograph as black and a host of other stumbling blocks confront the cameraman who tries to turn color into black-and-white. We understand all of that. But we also understand that the only purpose for publishing this book is Lou Fine's art (heaven knows the stories aren't worth dragging up after 35 years) and if one can't see it clearly, then the purpose is defeated. SPECIAL EDITION SERIES #2 doesn't make it for those reasons. What we can see is nice, but too much that should be there, isn't! **—J.V.**

RON GRAHAM PRESENTS: POWERHOUSE PEPPER #1; $2.50; 36 pages (plus five 11"x17" posters); side stapled; Ron Graham, editor; order from Ron Graham / 8167 Park Ave. / Forestville, CA 95436; comic book reprint.

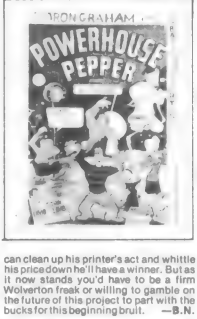
Ron Graham has a clog in his noggin for Basil Wolverton's Powerhouse Pepper comics so he got rash with his cash and dashed off a reprint of Pepper's first comic bash, which Graham has in his personal stash.

The comic marks the alliteratory chrome dome's first burst in his own eerie series from 1943 and contains three Pepper stories and two pages of whacky Wolverton's "Foolish Faces." Separately included are five 11"x17" posters of Wolverton caricatures printed from the original art. The subjects are George Washington, Abe Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover and Milton Berle. Great conversation art.

But Graham had some troubles on the production side of things. Like most fan publishers, he managed to find a printer who doesn't know how to photograph comic pages. As a result, everything's covered by a halftone screen. It's good halftoning but when it's done incorrectly, as this was, everything is reduced to various shades of gray. There are no true black or white areas. Another nagging fact is that this was printed on 8½"x11" paper while the comic only runs about 7"x10". Graham uses some of the extra borders to scrawl in a cover blurb and number the pages but a modified trimming job would have created a much more attractive magazine and diminished the washed out appearance of the printing.

To his credit, Graham realizes the production fiascoes and is trying to give people their money's worth by throwing in the poster sets (which have excellent printing). His aim is to eventually reprint all the Powerhouse Pepper books at a much more modest price to allow those who share his admiration of Wolverton a chance to own replicas of the expensive original comics.

This certainly isn't a new idea in fandom; comic reprints are popping up like crabgrass in suburbia these days. So far, however, finding a publisher who has both non-mercenary motives and informed production savvy is sadly rare. Graham's motives look good and if he



can clean up his printer's act and whittle his price down he'll have a winner. But as it now stands you'd have to be a firm Wolverton freak or willing to gamble on the future of this project to part with the bucks for this beginning bruit. **—B.N.**

NEWSPAPER STRIP REPRINTS

CARTOON ANNUAL '74; $5.00; 48 pages plus a 16-page 12"x15" newsprint supplement; annual; Jim Ivey, editor; various color applications in the supplement including four-color covers; order from Jim Ivey / 561 Obispo Ave. / Orlando, FL 32807; cartoon art portfolio.

Jim Ivey is a professional cartoonist who operates the Cartoon Museum for the sheer love of it. Every year he publishes a collection of old and rare samples from his displays so a bit of the museum can be seen by those who can't put in a personal appearance.

The pieces he's assembled are indeed impressive; to list them all would require more space than we're allotted for one zine. The range and scope of the work is equally diverse. There are newspaper strip cartoonists represented as well as political cartoonists, caricaturists and even pre-cartoonists. The samples go from an 1972 graphic continuity to a modern self-portrait by Alex Toth, touching many points in between. A good majority of the work is printed from the original art and wherever possible printed original size.

Several high spots of the issue include a tribute to Roy Crane, the creator of

"Wash Tubbs" and "Capt. Easy," eight pages of Chic (Murat) Young's "Beautiful Bab" from 1922, an array of Rube Goldberg's zany cartoons from as early as 1918 and a montage of political cartoons many of which date from the World War I era.

The supplement is devoted entirely to the newspaper comic strip field. The cover is a pastiche of characters from ten leading cartoonists done especially for David Folkman of the Rockland Co. **Journal News**, who contributed this section for inclusion in **CA**. The strips included in this collection span a half a century beginning with Rudolph Dirks' "The Foxy Captain" (the predecessor to "Katzenjammer Kids") and ending with fledgling "Peanuts," "Beetle Bailey" and "Andy Capp" strips.

This entire package is an exceptional collection for students, historians or fans of the cartoon and newspaper strips; and an excellent way to help support the unselfish endeavors of a man who is working to promote and preserve the heritage of this wonderful artform. **—B.N.**

THE MENOMONEE FALLS GAZETTE #143; 89¢ (or 12 issues/$9, 26/$18, 52/$33); 40 pages; 11"x17"; weekly; Jerry Sinkovec & Mike Tiefenbacher, editors; order from Street Enterprises / PO Box 255 / Menomonee Falls, WI 53051; newspaper strip reprint paper.

The good old Gaz has been suffering mightily at the hands of that old debbil inflation, necessitating a reluctant price increase to 89¢ a year (or $18 a half-year or 89¢ a copy). A lot of money, yes. But if you're an adventure freak or an art fan, you get a lot for your bucks.

It has come to our attention that a lot of people buy the Gaz but never read it! Come on, people, you're really missing something. The Gaz is one project for fans which should be supported not simply because it's a project for fans. It's worth support ... because every week the Gaz gives you forty pages packed with some damned fine stories. Not just nice art to look at—good stories! The abundance of the "fair-haired boy" art style in the Gaz strips has been used as an argument that the strips themselves are all alike. Reading a couple weeks worth will show what nonsense that argument is.

Consider the carefully-plotted, violent excitement of MODESTY BLAISE. The clever, almost tongue-in-cheek approach of Lou Fine's PETER SCRATCH. The 30s Warner Brothers atmosphere of RED BARRY. Fast action in JOHNNY HAZARD, an enjoyable mixture of adventure and humor in THE SEEKERS, highly-readable soap opera (for once!) in ON STAGE, and the most imaginative sci-fi adventure in comics (period!) in JEFF HAWKE. And that's only the beginning. Certainly some of the strips are duds, but there's something for almost every adventure fan.

The art is extra icing on the cake. Every week, a parade of some of the best illustrational strip art: Holdaway, Caniff, Williamson, Adams, Bellamy, Robbins, Dixon, Starr, ready for admiring, collecting, or swiping, with only a small percentage of clunkers.

After that speech, how can you resist a sub to the GAZETTE?

But to return to more prosaic matters, since the last GEORGE, the Gaz has modified its format as follows: MALE CALL and RED RYDER both ended their runs, an old BUCK ROGERS, TUG TRANSOM (a good strip!) has returned from bi-weekly to weekly status to fill the gap. A brand new strip, FAWN, written and drawn by Joe Wehrle, Jr., exclusively for the GAZETTE, debuted with #142. An exclusive Gaz strip is a great idea, but—well, maybe FAWN will improve with time.

Meanwhile, the show goes on. If you're an action or an art fan, you should be part of it. **—R.H.**

THE MENOMONEE FALLS GUARDIAN #64; 49¢ (subscriptions: 12/$5.00; 26/$10; 52/$19); 16 pages total; 11"x17"; mailed folded without envelope; weekly; Jerry Sinkovec and Mike Tiefenbacher, editors; order from Street Enterprises / PO Box 255 / Menomonee Falls, WI 53051; newspaper strip reprint paper.

The MENOMONEE FALLS GUARDIAN, fandom's only treasury of the best of American humorous newspaper strips, continues to struggle along despite some financial hardships recently revealed by editors. Finances have dictated a slight increase in price (from $17 a year to $19).

Major changes in lineup since the last GEORGE have been as follows: the Sunday version of the fine CONCHY strip has been added, along with Bob Thaves' strange daily, FRANK AND ERNEST. The POGO Sunday and the KRAZY KAT reprints have succumbed to financial pressures. The remaining lineup is as strong as ever: CONCHY, POPEYE, BROOM-HILDA, BC, TUMBLEWEEDS, BEETLE BAILEY, FEIFFER, and on and on ... how can you beat that, humor strip fans? **—R.H.**

RAINTREE #1; $1.50; 76 pages; Jay Kinder, editor; order from: Raintree / 575 Cocoanut Grove Station / Miami, FL 33133; newspaper strip reprint.

George Wunder is at last getting his due. Wunder, who drew TERRY AND THE PIRATES twice as long as its creator, Milton Caniff, has long been insulted or simply ignored by comic strip fans and historians alike. The treatment is understandable in a way. Caniff was at the high point of his career in his TERRY days. Taking over the country's best adventure comic strip was one hell of a task. Yet while neither Wunder's story nor his art ever came up to Caniff's level, TERRY was a strip of considerable merit.

RAINTREE was created to give Wunder's TERRY a chance for the recognition it deserves. The first issue reprints a TERRY cloak-and-dagger adventure from 1956. The story is representative of Wunder's best work. The art is crisp and swimming with the elaborate detail and deep shadows which Wunder loved. The script is a witty, old-fashioned tale that promises romp in which both Wunder's sense of adventure and his sense of humor play a part. There is plenty of action, a healthy dose of intrigue, and heaps of atmosphere.

This isn't to say everyone will like the strip. Wunder's strange way of drawing faces (especially women) has turned many people off. His dialogue is occasionally stilted. And the gypsy-flyer theme about which TERRY is built is a bit too dated for some tastes.

To pass RAINTREE by solely because of the story's theme would be a mistake. The art and story are still top-notch. There is a whole new world in George Wunder's work waiting to be discovered by fans of the adventure strip. Thanks should go to Jay Maeder for giving the 50s TERRY a chance to see the light of day. **—R.H.**

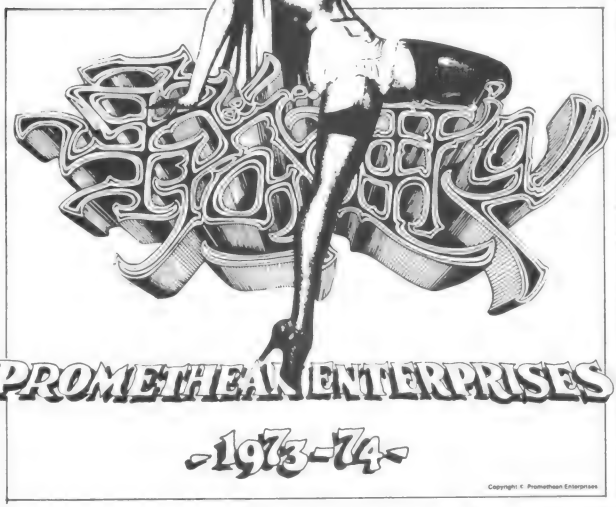
THE COMIC CONSUMER

Edited by Henry Anton

ONCE EVERY THREE YEARS

PROMETHEAN started out as a modest little offset artzine, with some emphasis on the work of the underground comics artists. With succeeding issues the emphasis has shifted almost totally to underground material and the magazine has become larger and more elaborate. The nearly three year gestation period between the previous issue and the recently released fifth issue has produced a package that's almost too big to digest in one gulp.

The major feature is an interview with Robert Crumb, the key figure in the underground comics movement. The interview was conducted by Al Davoren in 1972, before Crumb began his now almost total retreat from the limelight under the pressures of fame and success. It's the longest, most exhaustive interview with Crumb ever published and ever likely to be. Crumb was relaxed, talkative and outspoken; Davoren leads him through a roughly chronological discussion of his career, Crumb telling a wealth of delightful anecdotes about the crazy people and events that were part of one of the most vital and exciting periods in comics history. Crumb also opens up and talks extensively about his feeling, attitudes and his approach to comic art. The interview runs 17 pages of text and that is interspersed with 15 pages of Crumb photos and artwork. The art is rare early Crumb: "Roberta Smith, Office Girl," a strip done for the American Greetings house organ; "The Heap Years of the Auto," a tribute to America's mighty wheeled barges; "The Small Small Businessman," an evocative Depression reminiscence and many other collector's items.



Crumb's not the whole show by any means. A strip section includes a chapter of George Metzger's "Panoply Mind," continued from earlier issues. Unfortunately, the story is not completed, and it's anybody's guess when, where, or if the next chapter will appear. Bob Inwood does a dark, detailed werewolf story set in 18th Century Russia, also to be continued. There's a strange strip by Clifford Neal that attempts to catch the feel of the 50s crime comics; it's a nice try, but Neal's art is rather amateurish. This strip stands out as the sole exception to the very high level of art quality in the rest of the magazine. For laughs, there's Vince Davis' "Travels with Myron," an incredibly funny strip. There are also some fine drawings by Frank Brunner, Keith Kleespies, David Karbonik, Al Davoren, Bob Zoell and Trina. Kleespies also contributes "mobiustrip" a comic strip that is a Mobius strip—which means you have to cut it out and tape it together to read it properly. It's a clever piece of work and worth the trouble—and a clever ploy to get you to buy two copies!

Two very special items are the centerspread and the cover. The double fold-out in the center is a comic strip done by Victor Moscoso as an ad for a radio station. It originally appeared along the walls of San Francisco Muni buses. Unless you were on the bus, this is your only chance to see this amazing piece. The full color fold-out front cover is a painting by Robert Williams, the surrealist fine artist who also does underground comics. It's the only published Williams painting, and it's simply mind-boggling. The back cover is a similarly eye-popping painting by Alex Nino.

This 81-page fanzine is likely to remain a high-water mark for publications done out of love of comics for many years. Now, the price. Two bucks (pause for gasps of disbelief and possible faintings). Only two bucks, that's it. It's available from Promethean Enterprises, 3448 Mount Saint Helena Drive, San Jose, California 95127.

—**Art Scott**

THE DIRGE OF UNDERGROUNDS

We've spent the last twenty minutes thumbing through **Roget** in quest of a succinct, to-the-point word to encapsulate reactions to Mark James Estren's **History of Underground Comics**. (Published by Straight Arrow Press in soft cover for $9.95.)

Reluctantly, we've settled on "fiasco" and the fact that we didn't opt for a blatant bring-down like "utter crap" should prove something. A lot of hard work and ardor for the medium has gone into this tome from the Straight Arrow folks. And, somehow, Estren is to be commended for his spirit and dedication—despite the fact that the resulting book is, we're sad to report, a fiasco.

The book is filled with generalizations and there are a few errors, to boot—a few miscaptions, a few straight mistakes (Aside to Mark James: Carl Barks did **not** create Donald Duck). And the whole effect is of placing u.g. comix on the wrong pedestal for the wrong reasons. Or, at least for reasons that do not quite make sense.

Estren rambles on, attempting to depict the underground artists as a special breed producing work that has great significance. If he mentions anywhere **why** the work has significance, we failed to find it among the cacophony of illustrations.

At the current time, the underground comic book business is (hopefully) pulling itself out of a depression—one that has seen the evacuation of Crumb, Shelton and Corben and all those folks who bring up the rear in **National Lampoon**. This book, though certainly well meant, will do nothing to speed that recovery and may very well cause underground comic book readers to seriously question if the underground market is worth supporting.

Perhaps the word we're groping for **wasn't** "fiasco." Maybe it was "dirge."

—**Mark Evanier**

The author, Mark Estren

WHO'S WHO EVERYWHERE

Comic art has made several gargantuan strides over the last several years—as we write this in late October there are three consecutive comic art displays in three different New York galleries—but it looks as if the greatest advance is on the way. In book form.

Entitled **THE WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF COMICS**, the book will contain over 1200 biographies of comic artists, writers and features. It will also contain over 800 illustrations, a comic art chronology, analytical summaries, a bibliography, and a 10,000 name comic art index.

The hardcover book will be edited by Maurice Horn and published by Chelsea House/R.R. Bowker. The tentative price is $25 and the 1000 page book is expected to be ready by the winter, 1975.

"It's the most comprehensive survey of comics ever undertaken," Horn said. "Libraries are very receptive to the book. They're going to put it on their reference shelves, right next to the **WHO'S WHO OF AMERICAN AUTHORS**, and all the other reference works of that type."

Joe Brancatelli

The book's main feature will be the 1200 entries. They will cover the main contributors to world comic art from four continents. Each artist and writer will have a biography detailing his personal life and work in comic art. There will also be a second section, devoted to descriptions and analyses of the major comic art features of the world.

Among the dozen contributors besides editor Horn—who will be covering France—will be: Bill Blackbeard, curator of the S.F. Comic Art Academy, handling American comic strips; Richard Marschall, associate editor of United Features Syndicate, also covering American comic strips; Joe Brancatelli, former **INSIDE COMICS** editor, handling American comic books; Wolfgang Fuchs, co-author of **ANATOMY OF THE COMICS**, covering German comic art; Luis Gasca covering the Spanish comic art scene; Hisao Kato covering Japan and the Far Eastern comic art world; and Dennis Gifford, author of **DISCOVERING COMICS**, **THE BRITISH NEWSPAPER STRIP** and **SIX COMICS OF WORLD WAR ONE**, covering England's comic scene.

The book, which will be aimed at libraries, but which will also be available to fans and book stores, will cover all facets of the comic art world. Past and present features and creators will be discussed, as well as comic strips and books from all over the world.

"We're going out of our way to make the book super complete," Brancatelli said. "The bios on the artists, writers and editors, as well as the feature entries, will be invaluable."

Horn said that the book is about one-third complete at this time. It also seems probable that the work will be translated into a half-dozen foreign languages and have an annual supplement.

TURNABOUT IS FAIR PLAY

Fanzine cover art is usually material that's appeared somewhere else previously—like a professional book or magazine.

On the other hand, Roger Zelazny's latest tome, **THE GUNS OF AVALON**, sports a Ken Barr cover—taken from the cover of **PHASE I**.

Who says fanzine's aren't moving up in the world?

CHEAP, CHEAP

Ain't no doubt that hardback books are getting a hell of a lot more expensive than they used to be. What with inflation, recession, depression (?) and all, a $20 book is a lot more of an outlay than a year or two ago.

Enter Harvey Sobel—probably wearing a WIN button—and he's offering the range of Nostalgia Press books at a pretty hefty discount.

Or, as Harvey's ads claim "a dream come through."

An example of Harvey's prices: The **LITTLE NEMO** anthology of last year, which lists for $25, is available for only $20. Another example: the $20 **E.C. HORROR LIBRARY** is available from Harvey for only $16

Harvey's address is 11 Bette Lane, Drawer X, Commack, New York 11725. We'd advise you'd write for available titles and ordering information.

CARTOON ART MUSEUM OPENS

Museum of Cartoon Art Hall of Fame recently opened its doors in Greenwich, Connecticut. Sponsored by the **National Cartoonist's Society** and spearheaded by the multi-talented Mort Walker, the new museum is the culmination of ten years work. Originally conceived as a showplace for comic art and a means of educating the public to the importance of such art in American society, the museum project floundered for many years because of the lack of an appropriate site. Finally, last May, the cartoonists agreed on a 75-year-old stone building within walking distance of Walker's own home. Work in painting and refurbishing was quickly completed and the new museum was opened to the public on Aug. 11.

The museum is located at 384 Field Point Road, Greenwich, Connecticut, and is open 10-4 Tuesday through Friday, and 1-5 on Sunday. For those living too far away to visit, the Society has printed a booklet—"Classic Comics Collection"—that features 36 pages of brilliant repros of the best of the museum's collection (Copies are $3 from the museum, and all orders qualify as tax-deductible contributions.) This is one project that deserves the full support of fandom, so visit if you can. If you can't, by all means order the booklet.

Convention Calendar

MONTHLY GATHERINGS:

New York City: COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE, usually the second or third Sunday of every month. Information from Phil Seuling, P.O. Box 177, Coney Island Station, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11224

Boston, Mass.: SUNDAY FUNNIES, held once a month on a Sunday in Boston. Information from Don Phelps, P.O. Box 85, Cohasset, Mass. 02025. Phone (617) 268-1838.

Hollywood, Calif.: FIRST SUNDAY CLUB, held first Sunday of every month. Information from Greg Koulolian, 635 N. Citrus Ave., Hollywood, Calif. 90036

Detroit, Mich.: COMIC COLLECTOR'S CONVENTION, usually the last Sunday of the month. Information from Chris (313) 532-3245 or (313) 274-8843

OTHER CONVENTIONS:

New York City: MIGHTY MARVEL COMICON, March 22-24. Information from Phil Seuling, P.O. Box 177, Coney Island Station, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11224

Baltimore, Md.: BALTICON 9, March 28-30. Information from Dave L. Phillips, 915 Arran Road, Baltimore, Md. 21239

Jackson, Mich.: SPRING COMIC CONVENTION, April 4 & 5. Information from JCC Student Commission, 2111 Emmons Road, Jackson, Mich. 49201

Detroit, Mich.: STAR CON 3, May 15-18. Information from Star Con 3, P.O. Box 68, Detroit, Mich. 48223

Ontario, Canada: FANCON, May 18 (one day). Information from Fancon, 5 Ann Street, No. 1905, Port Credit, Ontario, Canada L5G 3E8

New York City: NEW YORK BOOK FAIR, May 25-27. Information from Sara Mittelman, 312 E. 206th Street, Bronx, N.Y.

New Orleans, La.: VUL-CON II, May 29-June 1. Information from Vul-Con II, P.O. Box 6087, New Orleans, La. 70182

Oklahoma City, Okla.: MULTICON 75, June 19-22. Information from Multicon '75, 1108 W. Main, Norman, Okla. 73069

Houston, Texas: HOUSTON COMIC & STAR TREK CON, June 25-29. Information from Earl Blair, 2511 Pennington Street, Houston, Texas 77016

New York City: COMIC ART CONVENTION, July 3-7. Information from Phil Seuling, P.O. Box 177, Coney Island Station, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11224

Louisville, Ky.: RIVERCON, July 25-27. Information from Don Rosa, 7410 Woodhill Valley Rd., Louisville, Ky. 40222

San Diego, Calif.: SAN DIEGO COMICON, July 30-Aug. 3. Information from S.D.C.C., P.O. Box 17066, San Diego, Calif. 92117

Philadelphia, Pa.: STAR TREK CON, August 7-10. Information from P.I.S.T.C., 260 Kipp Street, Hackensack, N.J. 07601

Toronto, Canada: FANFAIR III, August 1-3. Information from Fanfair III, Box 7230 Station A, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5W 1X8

New York City: NOSTALGIA '75, August 30-September 1. Information from Nostalgia '75, 59 Derby Court, Staten Island, N.Y. 10302

Boston, Mass.: NEWCON, October 3-5. Information from Don Phelps, Box 85, Cohasset, Mass. 02025

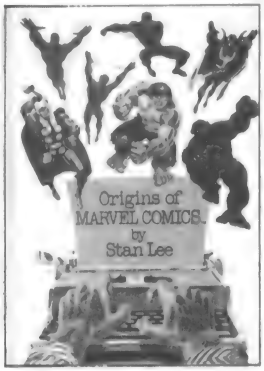
INSIDE BOOKS

by Dean Latimer

ORIGINS OF MARVEL COMICS
by Stan Lee:
Simon & Schuster, New York,
254 pp.
$9.95 cloth, $5.95 paper

Here it is all over again in ugly color, the Thing vs. the Silver Surfer, the Hulk vs. the Sub-Mariner, Thor vs. the Talisman, Spiderman vs. Himself, and so on, round after round. The good guys almost always triumph, right around the first panel of the last page, but then some horrible new catastrophe arises, and—Continued Next Month, Kids!

But there ain't no next month for these costumed katzenjammers and their soul-searching alter-egos; times have changed, nobody's buying that carbonated-violence schtick any more,



we want real blood 'n guts **a la** Conan, with some bare leg and heaving bosom thrown in. So that Stan Lee has packed up his Sixties, the best of Ditko and Kirby and Trimpe and Buscema and Severin, and he's offering it as Instant Nostalgia at a reasonable enough price, considering all the lousy color.

But the high points of the book, if you can call them that, are the commentary chapters written by Stan Lee himself. They read exactly like extended Bullpen notes, and will show you more clearly than anything else why you got so sick of Marvel comics. "In the beginning," he starts, "Marvel created the Bullpen and the Style. And the Bullpen was without form, and was void; and darkness was upon the face of the Artists. And the Spirit of Marvel moved upon the face of the Writers..."

This is blasphemy, pure and simple. In Tennessee they shoot people just for **reading** stuff like that. "I've always been a nut," Lee admits, "about the poetic flavor of the Bible and the sentence structure and tilt of Elizabethan writing"; and while he freely admits to being frequently confused by the difference between "hast" and "hath," he congratulates us all for having had the good taste to buy **Mighty Thor** in spite of it. Will we buy **Origins Of Marvel Comics**, though?

Well look, just in case you're curious, halfway through the book, Stan Lee candidly explains why he **really** changed his name from Stanley Martin Lieber. That might make it worth your while to buy it. But if only he'd thrown in a few vintage pin-ups from **Millie The Model**...

DISNEYANA: Walt Disney Collectables
by Cecil Murray:
Hawthorne Books Inc., New York,
386 pp.
$19.95, 16 color pages

This book has to rank as a formidable monument of **kitsch**, and should make a grand gift to any friend who happens to be a fan of high camp. For its avowed purpose, which is to serve as a guide to committed collectors of Disney artifacts, it functions very well, I imagine. Every piece of garish junk ever to bear the official Disney imprimatur is cataloged in here, photographed, dated, described in its dimensions, and provided with its original manufacturer's name and address. This is not what makes it a fifteen-dollar reference or gift book, though—it's the photos of the junk, hundreds of them, and some in color, looking bizarre and repulsive, that sell it.

Boy, did the Disneys ever foist a lot of garbage on a delighted America. This book has photos of hankies, toothbrushes, combs, stationery, purses, sports equipment, cutlery, dolls, comic books, comic strips, hardcovers, paperbacks, candles, toys, buttons, furniture, musical instruments, pins, bedspreads, clothes, costumes, rugs, flower-seeds, records, movie reels, movie projectors, lunchboxes, school supplies, whips, greeting-cards, radios, record players, food, puppets, wallets, kitchen utensils, flashlights, lamps, slide projectors and hand viewers, watches, candy bars, jewelry, grooming articles, amusement parks, everything cheap with the possible exception of booze and prophylactics, sporting the cute, wholesome visages of Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Minnie, Huey, Louie, and/or Dewey, Horace Horsecollar, Clarabelle Cow, Practical Pig, the Big and/or L'il Bad Wolves, Davey Crockett, Mary Poppins, Lady, the Tramp, Tinker Bell, etc., etc. And all of it a ghastly crock of shit, except of course in the eyes of Collectors, those trivia-obsessed individuals who pursue artifacts of the recent past with all the avidity and ingenuity of Heinrich Schliemann digging through eight layers of ancient Troy. I'm not one for sidewalk psychology, but there must be something more than slightly fey about a

person to whom Kay Kamen's printed inventory of Disney studio properties from 1938-44 is a "rare and valuable item." What are these people really looking for? What have they lost?

Ah well, better this than stalking eight-year-olds through the monkey-bars hissing, "Wanna see what I got in my raincoat?" This Cecil Murray himself seems to be fairly level-headed. In fact, his prose is so rigorously dry and one-dimensional, and the amount of it so mercifully negligible for a volume of this massive heft, that one has the suspicion he's a normal person who took on the burden of researching this book as atonement for sins committed in a former life.

To the Disney comics he lends little enough space, except for the enormous "Appendix C" at the rear of the book, where is listed every Disney title printed from 1938 to 1970, along with its date and whether or not it was written and/or drawn by Carl Barks. No other Disney comic writer/artist is mentioned by Murray; in fact, given Disney's famous reluctance to reveal the identities of his artists, lest the loving public begin to suspect he didn't draw all this stuff **himself**, we must be grateful that Barks, at least, emerged from obscurity. But you'd imagine, since Barks' Donald Duck was one of the few **good** things the Disneys ever produced, and since Murray deigns to include a biographical sketch of Barks in this book,

then there ought to be some Barks artwork, too. But no, there's nothing that looks like Barks in the book, although the cover of his first Duck comic, **Donald Duck Discovers Pirate Gold** (1942), is featured in the color section; as it happens, though, Barks drew that strip with Jack Hannah—of all people—and the **Pirate Gold** art does look a trace more like Yogi Bear stuff than Barks stuff.

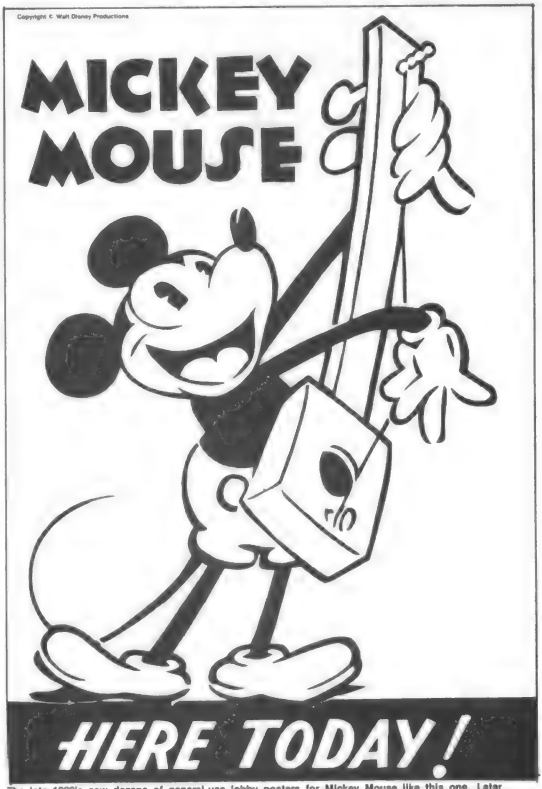
But **why** no Barks? Well, Gold Key, the Western Printing & Lithography outfit, has been sporadically reprinting old **Uncle Scrooge** and **Walt Disney's Comics & Stories** books under its own copyright since 1962, when the Disneys dropped the titles. Also, Barks went to Western in 1943, and was really working for **them** all the time he was signing his stuff "Walt Disney." From all indications then, Murray here couldn't get the copyright permission for the Barks stuff, which must have really set old Walt to spinning in his liquid nitrogen. The Disneys just **hated** copyright hassles.

Not that you'd know it to read this book. Why, didja know that in 1930, just two years after **Steamboat Willie**, a 14-year-old kid named Bob Clampett showed up at Roy Disney's office in Burbank asking permission to sell these cute little Mickey Mouse dolls he'd made? And did Walt and Roy sue? Hell no, they set Clampett and his whole family to work, making Mouse puppets all through the Depression. The affection for Disney thus fostered in young Clampett inspired him to invent Bugs Bunny for Warner Brothers.

Nor did the Disneys sue when Walter Lantz ripped off their first brainstorm, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. They couldn't. Oswald had been sold to Lantz by distributor Charles Mintz, who'd screwed the copyright out of Walt when he was young.

But they've been suing ever since, by Scrooge! Murray only mentions a couple of the famous Disney lawsuits, noting that the courts have always shown a laudable disposition for upholding any case brought by Disney Inc., molders of American culture. Can the outfit that gave us such everlasting glories as "Chim-Chim-Cher-ee" and "Supercalli-fragilisticexpalidocious" possibly be in it just for the **buck**? No, as Roy explained, the suits are initiated strictly out of good-taste considerations: "We have never fought for money. We have always turned our backs on things of this kind, 'Let's go ahead constructively and work on something fresh.' We were never rag-pickers trying to get money out of a situation."

When Roy croaked (and was decently buried) in 1971, the company's $577,000,000 assets, with expected gross of $325,000,000, went up into the hands of former Disney mailboy E. Cordon Walker, and former ABC executive Donn Tatum, with Walker playing Walt to Tatum's Roy. And they have just sued the living daylights out of anyone with the temerity to draw in any of the three or four recognizable Disney styles. A lot of the stuff in this book might not look so all-fired quaint and archaic if young



The late 1920's saw dozens of general-use lobby posters for Mickey Mouse like this one. Later Columbia Pictures would imprint the actual title of the cartoon on the poster.

contemporary artists like Greg London could find publishers unafraid to print their stuff.

THE COMICS: An Illustrated History of Comic Strip Art
by Jerry Robinson:
G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, $14.95

These gigantic newspaper-comic anthologies seem to come out anually, a bigger and more colorful one every year. And since comics is the only form of art that can safely be said to have been generated in America (and only if you disregard Hogarth and Rowlandson), then it's a fine patriotic gesture as well; I can't wait for the American Bi-Centennial Anthology of Comic Art.

If only they'd find some new copy to accompany the pictures, though. In matters of strict visual content, this is the best anthology I've seen so far, with whole Sunday pages reprinted straight from the original newspapers, nostalgically-faded colors and all; and entire episodes of black-and-white daily strips authentically presented, and to hell with wasted space. But the accompanying copy is just the same hoary old gossip that you can read in any other anthology of this kind.

For example, author Robinson dutifully explains, for the umpteenth time, why R.F. Outcault's **Down in Hogan's Alley** featured a Yellow Kid: because Joseph Pulitzer, publisher of the New York **World** in which the strip appeared in 1894, wanted to test a new unsmearable yellow-tallow pigment in his color

press. Of the racism and imperialist warmongering so characteristic of **Hogan's Alley** (printed during a veritable Golden Age of American culture, to which conservatives like Barry Goldwater and Gerald Ford are forever wishing the country would return), Robinson utters not a syllable.

Then we learn once again why there have always been two sets of Katzenjammer Kids. It seems William Randolph Hearst, **Pattie's** illustrious grandpa, stole the idea himself from the German artist Wilhelm Busch's **Max and Moritz**, and set 20-year-old Rudolph Dirks to drawing **The Katzenjammer** ("Hangover") **Kids** for his paper, the New York **Journal**, in 1897. Fifteen years later, Pulitzer lured Dirks over to the **World**, whereupon a grand copyright suit arose, after which Dirks was allowed to draw the characters that had been ripped off from Busch, while Hearst was allowed to keep his original title. So that Hearst set H.H. Knerr to drawing **The Katzenjammer Kids** for the **Journal**, while Dirks did **Hans und Fritz** for the **World**, until the jingoism attendant to WWI prompted him to Anglicize the title to **The Captain and the Kids.** A grand and sordid story, which could be rendered infinitely more educational by an account of the murders and mayhem that routinely characterized the Hearst-Pulitzer competition; but this we do not get from Robinson.

Robinson is friendly to the funnies and their creators, which is perfectly understandable. Rat bastards though a good deal of them were and are, these cartoonists every one of them go a good ways toward making life in this country a little more bearable, no mean feat. However, you have to consider that every one of them living today is filthy rich; and a little airing of dirty linen could not possibly do them any perceptible harm.

Al Capp is an example irresistable to cite. Robinson provides, to his credit, the lovely story of how Capp was limping along a Chicago sidewalk one night in '33 a sheat of unsold cartoons visible under his elbow, when a palatial limousine pulled up alongside him and the sumptuously-dressed occupant thereof disentangled himself from a bejewelled hussy and offered Capp, through the window, $10 a page to help him finish a **Joe Palooka** strip before the deadline. Ham Fisher was later done to the death partly through the effects of Capp's emotional and fervid lawsuits, but of this we hear nothing in **The Comics.** Robinson does quote Joe Palooka's current artist, Tony Di Preta, as confessing of his, "He's still almost too good for today. He needs a vice or two to make him more human." In fact, he outrageous ideal of super-righteous super-masculinity presented by Joe Palooka, the Whitest of all Hopes, did so much to make America what it is today that an exposure of Palooka's creator as a whore-addicted alcoholic would do nothing but good for every one of us. But it wouldn't sell a Christmas book, no sir.

And to Capp, Robinson accords the usual laurel, as "the best satirist since Laurence Sterne." This is just terrible horseshit. Whether he was putting down the Right in the 50's or the Left in the 60's, Capp was never a one to be compared with Sterne. Christ, he couldn't even rank with **Peacock**, who at least managed to endow his political nemesis with **life**; whereas Capp's long-haired campus rioters were precisely as imaginary as the straw-stuffed effigies of Lin Pao which Maoist peasants continually burn in the streets to reaffirm their knee-reflex radicalism. Capp is crap. The drawing of the strip is the only thing that commends it, and that only got good after Capp himself stopped drawing it, and delegated the work to four or five artists working anonymously in a hidden studio.

Which leads us to the final failing of Robinson: he's a shallow interpreter of comic art. In the obligatory gesture of presenting Al Capp as a scourger of the Right, he points out that Fearless Fosdick is a satire of Chester Gould's **Dick Tracy.** Well actually, the difference between Tracy and Fosdick isn't all that great, but that's immaterial. Why has no one ever recognized the meaning of Gould's Vera Alldid operation, where four chimpanzees draw a strip that really doesn't need drawing at all? Some may say that **The Invisible Tribe** is making fun of the likes of Johnny Hart, but I think different. I think Gould's satirizing Al Capp right back. Capp, like that asshole Alldid, lets morons write and draw his stuff while he himself travels to colleges and TV shows throughout the land, expounding on righteousness and virtue. Unlike Alldid, though, Capp was caught proposing sodomy to a coed with his stump exposed. But we will hear none of this from Robinson. □

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VIEWPOINTS

by Pamela Blevins

You Can't Keep A Good Duck Down

"Via Duct?" was the incredibly far-sighted question posed by Chico Marx in the classic comedy "Cocoanuts." Why a duck? Why not a chicken? Or a mouse for that matter?

But how was poor Chico to know that a few years following his poignant comment, comic book publishers would be asking the same question.

Why NOT a duck? Make him scrappy, tempermental and not terribly bright. Dress him in a blue cap and sailor suit and the finished product would become the first "anthropomorphic fall guy" in comics.

At least that was what Walt Disney **hoped** would happen when he gave life to Donald Duck on a cold, rainy February night circa 1938.

Donald Duck? Well, why **not** Donald Duck? There was a Mickey Mouse, wasn't there!

Donald debuted in the newspaper comics page, but soon graduated to comic books in 1940.

One major reason for Donald's popularity lies in the fact that there is a little duck in us all. Donald is destined to remain poor and work hard, gaining very little. Yet in spite of this, there isn't an adventure or a job he will not undertake. And usually if he succeeds at something small—like baking a cake—you can bet he will swell with confidence and then suffer a terrible misfortune—like baking a gigantic cake containing the wrong porportion of ingredients which finally explodes before the guests.

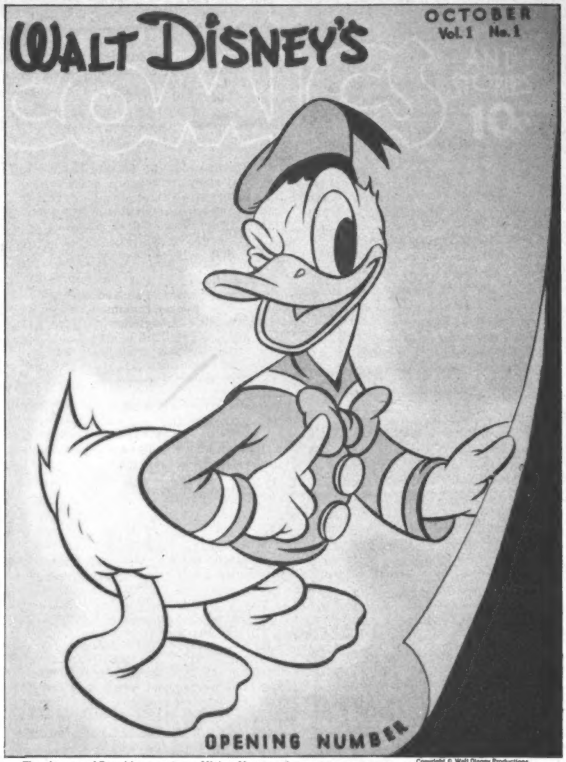
However, this is the major reason for Donald's popularity with adults who seem to understand and identify with his misfortunes. If he is not matching wits with his amazingly **lucky** cousin, Gladstone Gander, he is off on an adventure to some remote corner of the world with his wealthy uncle, Scrooge McDuck, or having his own adventure with nephews Huey, Dewey and Louie.

The duck family, like all other comic book families, is composed of aunts, uncles and cousins, so little readers won't have to think too much about sexual matters. Though in the early days, it was thought that the presence of a mother and father might lead to "embarrassing" questions from children.

Donald's uncle, Scrooge McDuck, was created in 1947, and became so popular that it was not uncommon for a monthly issue to sell more than a million copies. (In fact, during a month surveyed in the fifties all comic books combined sold over 16 million issues!)

Uncle Scrooge is ageless. In a 1960 comic he is teary-eyed while recalling how, as a young man in the "land rush of '88," he "blazed a trail through the wilderness." Scrooge will never forget (or let you forget, for that matter) that he once stood "penniless" on the gold fields of the cold northern Klondike. But through shrewd dealings and some good tips, he soon become **so** fantastically rich that no one can even begin to pin a label on his financial worth!

Yet there is divine comedy in his all-too-human condition. One story showed Uncle Scrooge almost losing his



The glamour of Donald won out over Mickey Mouse as he graces the cover of the first issue of Walt Disney's Comics and Stories, October, 1940.

During World War II, many cartoon characters were used as insignia by the military. None were as popular as Donald, however. Here he goes to work for a U.S. Naval Reserve Aviation Base.

fortune to his arch enemies, the Beagle Boys, because he was too cheap to change his glasses which were made in the late 1800's!

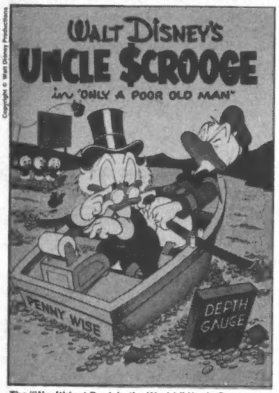
Scrooge likes his money around so he can smell it, swim and burrow in it and, naturally, count it. Thereby rubbing the grain of the American monetary system by hoarding his cash in a gigantic money bin instead of placing it in a bank or playing the stock market with it.

Both Donald and Scrooge rely heavily on nephews Huey, Dewey and Louie to pull them out of close scrapes. As is true with many youths, the three young ducks are a lot wiser for their years than their uncles.

This makes the duck comics truly funny, because beneath all the slapstick and adventure, there is often a message; remembering, of course, these "message" comics were written in the forties and throughout the fifties—long before the subtle message became an accepted fact in the medium.

For example, an issue of Uncle Scrooge written in 1957 dealt with pollution, greed and land grabbing.

"I want to leave Duckburg with its smog and noise and shoving people. I want a home in the wilds," the miser duck tells Sidewalk Sam, the Real Estate Man.



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The "Wealthiest Duck in the World," Uncle Scrooge, was launched in his own book in 1952.

The greatest duck artist in the world, Carl Barks, and his wife in Atlanta during 1974.

Money **will** buy anything, even in comic books, and Scrooge is soon the owner of a plot of land in the far north with "1000 lakes and no neighbors." He heads up there with his nephews, exchanging his fortune for the peace of the land and "lakes, clean, blue like sapphires."

Unfortunately, the natural wealth of his land soon attracts his greedy eye, and he begins to think about how much moose hides will fetch on the New York market; and how reeds along the river will make wallboards; and how he could drill wells and pipe natural gas to chemical plants.

Soon, however, the ducks discover they are not alone. The land is occupied by Indians—pygmy Indians, who talk in "rhythm like Longfellow's 'Song of Hiawatha.'" The little fellows recognize the threat the intruders bring and set out to turn them away from the land that had been theirs since the birth of their civilization.

"By whom was this token given?" they ask Scrooge of his deed. "By whose hand these written scratches? Did the sun from high above sell you all these lands and waters? Did the winds that bend the pine trees? Did the rain shower or the lightning sign away these forests to you?"

When they are told that the seller was none other than Sidewalk Sam, they inform Scrooge that no such token would be honored by the fishes, creatures of the forests and the birds that the Indians call their brothers. "None could sign away these woodlands. None could have the right or the reason—but the chiefs of all the brothers in a pow-wow with the seasons," the tiny chief tells Scrooge.

Though this is not considered profound by 1975 standards, remember this book was written **long before** Indian causes and pollution were even **discussed** by Americans. Yet the message is so plainly evident, even a child could pick it up.

This is just one example! But because of it and fine "duck art" by Carl Barks and others, Donald Duck comics are rapidly becoming collector's items, and it is possible to pay as much as $300 for a rare 1940's edition! How many of us had the foresight of Chico to realize that those duck books would some day rocket from ten cents a copy to such a high market value today?

Comic books are not without their faults, however. Advertising has crept into them in abundance, and reruns far outweigh original new stories. The clever games and projects have vanished, and publishers no longer solicit the help of youngsters in determining what style lettering is most appealing to them.

But kids **and** adults keep on buying them because they offer a particular brand of humor and another approach to all our problems that makes it all a little more bearable.

Why a duck? WHY NOT! □

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Little Lulu Comics today are a travesty of the elegantly crafted episodes of the early fifties. Howard Cruse, 1168 E. 16th Ave. S., Birmingham, Ala. 35205.

Corben is God. Keep those cards & letters coming in, fans. We have a lot to discuss. P. Daley, 1547 N. Dearborn Pkwy., #3N.E., Chicago, Ill. 60610.

To my best friend, Steve Whitney, read more comics. And I'll see you soon. Scott.

Bibliographer needs info and material on Lenny Bruce, R. Crumb, Dylan, Feiffer, Paul Krassner (Realist #s 1-19, 22, 26, 33-4, 37-8), Alan Watts (Earth, Oracle, SCP Bulletins), Zappa. Write: J. Drougas, 9 Sorowoc Ln., Bay Shore, N.Y. 11706.

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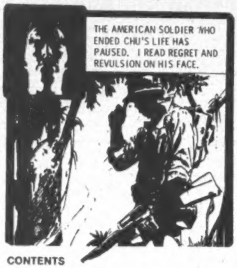

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THE LAST WORD

by Keim Lachin

There's a bizarre, almost Kafkaesque line most New York publishing corporations are fond of using which runs something like "to work here, you must have already worked here." The translation is simply that they don't hire amateurs.

Unfortunately, the problem is that most of us **are** amateurs. Sure, maybe we wrote a story that appeared scrunched between ten ads in some obscure fanzine, or put out homemade or garage comics with a friend, but when it gets right down to it, Superman or Spiderman stories we haven't written. Yet that's the main reason we've shlepped to the "big city" in the first place. WE WANT TO!

We've come desperately hoping that our puny portfolio and a decade's knowledge of comic book lore filed next to unimportant AA and BS degrees will convince somebody (anybody) to spend the time training us so that someday we might be able to fulfill that childhood fantasy of first meeting, then working for, Stan Lee and getting Jack Kirby or Neal Adams to illustrate our stories.

There are **big** problems involved here. Warren doesn't hire writers per se. Stories are sent in and, if accepted, are published. If not, they are returned. Period. You would think that a beginning company like Seaboard would hire beginning writers, especially after the initial trash they turned out (including a two-page 'thriller' by this writer). But according to editor Larry Lieber (who we all know is Stan Lee's brother, right?), they are looking for the seasoned pro who already **knows** what will sell and what won't.

"We neither have the time nor the money to start training beginning writers at this time," sez Big Lar.

Well, what about National Periodicals? Confronting Carmine Infantino at the July 1975 Comicon in the Commodore Hotel, his reply was simply, "We're not hiring now. There's Roy Thomas—ask him."

Later inquiries **did** produce a personal interview with E. Nelson Bridwell, who said basically the same thing, but added that I should send in plot synopsis and he'd let me know. Which they do in very nice, cordial responses, Their philosophy seems to be that by telling you what is bad you'll eventually know what is good!

And finally Marvel, who is publishing in excess of 90 books (though too many of them reprints). It's the same story of too many writers not having enough work, so how can we hire someone who hasn't already published and doesn't have experience?

Probably the most disillusioning aspect of the comic book field is the contempt the pros have for other pros (sorry, no names). Each company calls the other "too big" or "too small" or too this or too that (depending, naturally, on who's doing the calling) and the competition is much fiercer than readers would surmise from DC's letter pages and Marvel's Monthly Bulletin. (One rumor has it that the sole reason for Seaboard's very existence is pure and simple revenge: Chip Goodman left Marvel the day his contract expired—there are many rumors why—which coincidentally was right after both he and Martin sold their controlling interest in Marvel to Cadence Industries.)

So what to do? The first thing is to realize that all three companies stress different selling points. Both DC and Seaboard state they are returning to the old days when comic books stressed action and dialogue over plot intricacies and polysyllabic narration. DC deals mainly in fantasy, while Seaboard tries to find the formula that Stan Lee used during 1965-68 era, which writer Gary Friedrich claims were the best comics ever written. Marvel and Warren want a strange brew mixing both action and strong dialogue with long, detailed plots and heavy narration, though these requirements vary from book to book. (a **Man-Thing** needing more than **Spider-Man**, for example).

Will talent finally prevail over the forces of the "economic situation" and the hierarchy within? I don't know. I'd like to think so. But, sadly, I've found that being in the right place at the right time is as important as raw uncultivated talent, and in some cases even more so, in getting hired. (I landed my current job by happening to be an unemployed writer in New York who had lived in Florida and knew the terrain because the company in question was producing a New York-based magazine concerning Floridian attractions and travel information!)

Advice? None. New York is a weird blend of people stalking the streets with sorrow expressions, and the wildest, most insanely great individuals you'd ever want to mess your mind, making life here very much like a comic book: You pays yer quarter and yer takes yer chances! □

Keim Lachin is the pseudonym used by a struggling writer who recently moved to New York in the hopes of landing a job with a comic book company. He felt that using his real name would not further his chances of one day reaching his goal. We feel he is undoubtedly correct in that assumption.